In the Name of Allah,
the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

قال الله تعالى:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ ٱللَّهُ لِيُذۡهِبَ عَنكُمُ ٱلرِّجۡسَ أَهۡلَ ٱلۡبَيۡتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمۡ تَطۡهِيرًا﴾

"Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification"

Surat Al-Ahzab 33:33

Prophetic traditions mentioned in both in Sunni and Shi'ah authoritative reference books of *hadith* and *tafsir* (exegesis of the Qur'an) have confirmed that this holy verse was revealed to exclusively refer to the People of the Cloak [*ahl Al- kisa'*], viz. Muhammad, Ali, Fatimah, al- Hasan, and al- Husayn ('a) as the *Ahl al- Bayt* (People of the Household). For instance, refer to the following references: *Sunni:* Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241 AH), *al- Musnad*, 1:231; 4:107; 6:292, 304; *Sahih Muslim* (d. 261 AH), 7:130; Al- Tirmidhi (d. 279 AH), *Sunan*, 5:361 et al.; Al- Dulabi (d. 310 AH), *Al- Dhuriyyah al- Tahirah al- Nabawiyyah*, p. 108; Al- Nasa'i (d. 303 AH), *Al- Sunan al- Kubra'*, 5:108; 113; Al- Hakim al- Nayshaburi (d. 405 AH), *Al- Mustadrak 'ala' s- Sahihayn*, 2:416, 3:133, 146- 147; Al- Zarkashi (d. 794 AH), *Al- Burhan*, p. 197; Ibn Hajar al- Asqalani (d. 852 AH), *Fath al- Bari Sharh Sahih al- Bukhari*, 7:104.

Shi'ah: Al- Kulayni (d. 328 AH), *Usul al- Kafi*, 1:287; Ibn Babawayh (d. 329 AH), *Al- Imamah wa' t- Tabsirah*, p. 47, *hadith* 29; Al- Maghribi (d. 363 AH), *Da'a'im al- Islam*, pp. 35, 37; Al- Saduq (d. 381 AH), *Al- Khisal*, pp. 403, 550; Al- Tusi (d. 460 AH), *Al- Amali*, *hadith* 438, 482, 783.

For more details, refer to the exegesis of the holy verse recorded in the following books of *tafsir*: Al- Jassas (d. 370 AH), *Ahkam al- Qur'an*; Al- Wahidi (d. 468 AH), *Asbab al- Nuzul*; Ibn al- Jawzi (d. 597 AH), *Zad al- Masir*; Al- Qurtubi (d. 671 AH), *Al- Jami' Li- Ahkam al- Qur'an*; Ibn Kathir (d. 774 AH), *Tafsir*; Al- Tha'labi (d. 825 AH), *Tafsir*; Al- Tabari (d. 875 AH), *Tafsir*; Al- Suyuti (d. 911 AH), *Al- Durr al- Manthur*; Al- Shawkani (d. 1250 AH), *Fath al- Qadir*; Al- 'Ayyashi (d. 320 AH), *Tafsir*; Al- Qummi (d. 329 AH), *Tafsir*; Furt al- Kufi (d. 352 AH), *Tafsir* at the margin of the exegesis of *Surat Al- Nisa'* verse 59; Al- Tabarsi (d. 560 AH), *Majma' al- Bayan*, as well as many other sources.

THE EPITOMES OF TRUE GUIDANCE (14)THE LIFE OF IMAM AL-MAHDI(AS)

قال رسول الله ﷺ:

"إني تاركُ فيكُمُ الثَقلين: كتاب الله، وعترتي أهلَ بيتي، ما إن تمسكتُم بهما لن تضلوا أبداً وأَنَّهُما لَن يَفترِقا حتّى يردا عَليَّ الحوضَ"

The Messenger of Allah (s) said: "Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things [thaqalayn]: The Book of Allah and my progeny ['itrati], the members of my Household [Ahl al-Bayt]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [hawd] (of Kawthar)."

Some references:

Al-Hakim an-Nayshaburi, Al-Mustadrak 'ala's-Sahihayn (Beirut), vol. 3, pp. 109-110, 148, 533

Muslim, As-Sahih, (English translation), book 31, hadiths 5920-3.

At-Tirmidhi, As-Sahih, vol. 5, pp. 621–2, hadiths 3786, 3788; vol. 2, p. 219.

An-Nasa'i, Khasa'is Ali ibn Abi Talib, hadith 79.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Al-Musnad, vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26; vol. 3, pp. 26, 59; vol. 4, p. 371; vol. 5, pp. 181–182, 189-190.

Ibn al-'Athir, Jami' al-Usul, vol. 1, p. 277.

Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidayah wa'n-Nihayah, vol. 5, p. 209.

Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al- Qur'an al- 'Azim, vol. 6, p. 199.

Nasir ad-Din al- Albani, Silsilat al- Ahadith as-Sahihah (Kuwait: Ad-Dar as-Salafiyyah), vol. 4, pp. 355-358.

BEACONS OF GUIDANCE (14)
THE LIFE OF IMAM AL-MAHDI (AS)

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CONTENTS

PREFACE 13

INTRODUCTION 15

SECTION ONE 27

CHAPTER ONE IMAM MAHDI (‘A) IN A GLIPMSE 29

CHAPTER TWO THE PROMISED MAHDI (‘A) AND THE SIGNS OF HIS OCCULTATION IN THE LIGHT OF PREVIOUS RELIGIONS 32

1. Having faith in a universal reformer; a natural and original human quality 32
2. Glad tidings about the reappearance of the great saviour in the light of the Holy Books 33
3. The profound belief of the the Saviour in Judaism and Christianity 34
4. Belief in a universal saviour in the light of non-religious thoughts 36
5. The Universal Saviour's long life in the light of human thought 37
6. Having faith in Imam Mahdi (‘a) is a manifestation of a natural need 37
7. Human thought and Imam Mahdi's (‘a) occultation 39
8. Religious thought also believes in the appearance of a Universal Reformer after occultation 39
9. Disagreement about the identity of the Universal Saviour 41
10. Confusion amongst the experts with regards to the interpretation of those glad tifings 43
11. A technical method to solve this disagreement 43
12. The Shi’ah version of interpreting the Saviour: Al-Mahdi (‘a) and presenting the solution to all disagreements 44
13. Al-Qadi al-Sabati's opinion 45
14. The heavenly glad tidings can only be applied to Shi’ah version of al-Mahdi (‘a) 47
15. Occultation of the Twelfth Imam (‘a) and the glad tidings 48
16. The glad tidings in the divine book and the qualities of al- Mahdi (‘a) 49
17. The glad tidings of the heavenly books and Imam Mahdi's (‘a) qualities 51
18. How to understand the identity of the Saviour in the light of the glad tidings 52

19. Relying on the glad tidings in the books of bygone religions and the issue of distortion 53
20. Relying on the glad tidings which Islam has confirmed 54
21. Effects and influence of the glad tidings of other religions in the belief of Mahdism 56
22. Conclusion 57

CHAPTER THREE THE PROMISED MAHDI (‘A) AND THE SIGNS OF HIS OCCULTATION IN THE HOLY QUR'AN 62

1. The land will never remain without an Imam 64
2. For every era there is an Imam supervising the actions of his nation 74
No period is without the guide leading the people towards Him with His permission 84

CHAPTER FOUR THE PROMISED MAHDI (‘A) AND THE SIGNS OF HIS OCCULTATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE TRADITIONS NARRATED BY THE TWO PARTIES 93

1. Hadith of Thaqalayn 93
2. Narration of the “Twelve Caliphs” 104
3. The common words of the narrations 104
4. The hadith of “the victorious Ummah of him who will spread Allah's command” 116
5. Hadiths of “no era will remain empty of a leader from Quraysh to free the people from dying in ignorance” 121

SECTION TWO 127

CHAPTER ONE THE GROWTH AND TRAINING OF IMAM MAHDI (‘A) 129

1. The Day of the Birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a) 129
2. The concurrent (tawatur) news of the birth of the Imam (‘a) 130
3. The conditions of the birth 131
4. Anticipatory news about the mysterious birth 132
5. The hidden birth, the sign of the promised Mahdi (‘a) 134

CHAPTER TWO STAGES OF THE LIFE OF IMAM MAHDI (‘A) 137

CHAPTER THREE IMAM MAHDI (‘A), UNDER THE PROTECTION OF HIS FATHER 138

1. The role of Imam 'Askari (‘a) in proclaiming the birth of Imam Mahdi 138
2. The presence of Imam Mahdi (‘a) at the death of his father 140

SECTION THREE 143

CHAPTER ONE THE SHORT-TERM OCCULTATION OF IMAM MAHDI (‘A) 145

1. The acceptance of the responsibility of Imamate by Imam Mahdi (‘a) in childhood 145
2. Performing prayer on his father and proclaiming the existence 147
3. The aims of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) for performing prayer for the body of father 150
4. The two occultations of Imam Mahdi (‘a) 152

CHAPTER TWO THE REASONS OF THE SHORT-TERM OCCULTATION OF IMAM MAHDI (‘A) 154

1. The means of the existence of short-term occultation 154
2. The great Prophet (s) and Imams' (‘a) planning for the occultation of Imam Mahdi (‘a) 156
3. The reason for two phases of concealment 163
4. Pursuing the news of Imam al-Mahdi (‘a) and his whereabout by 'Abbassi's government 164

CHAPTER THREE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF IMAM MAHDI (‘A) DURING THE SHORT-TERM CONCEALMENT 167

1. How to prove the existence and the Imamate of Imam Mahdi (‘a) 167
2. Completing other needs of the nation in relation with Islamic learning 168
3. Establishing the institution of the authorized representation 169
4. Protecting the dignity of faithful Community 172
5. Issuing letters (Tawqi’at) 174
6. Proclaiming the end of short-term absence 178

SECTION FOUR 181

CHAPTER ONE THE LONG-TERM OCCULTATION OF IMAM MAHDI (‘A) AND ITS REASONS 183

1. The general axis of the activity of Imam Al-Zaman (‘a) in the era of long-term occultation 183
2. The reasons of occultation in the noble narrations 184

CHAPTER TWO IMAM MAHDI'S (‘A) ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE LONG-TERM OCCULTATION 194

1. The Imam providing care through Islamic discipline 194
2. Guarding the pure Islam and strengthening the process of Ijtihad 195
3. The companions of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) during long-term occultation 200

4. Meeting with the believers in the long-term occultation 201
5. Intensifying the belief in his existence 202
6. Appearance in the time of Hajj 203

CHAPTER THREE DUTIES OF THE LONG-TERM OCCULTATION PERIOD 204

1. The most important duties of the Shi'ahs in the time of occultation 204
2. The importance of awaiting the reappearance 207
3. The reality of waiting 210
4. The conditions of waiting 214
5. Waiting and the immediate preparation for appearance 216

SECTION FIVE 221

CHAPTER ONE THE SIGNS OF APPEARANCE OF IMAM MAHDI (‘A) 223

1. Some points about the signs of appearance 223
2. The certain and non-certain signs 224
3. The symbolic language in the narrations that relate to the signs 224
4. The most eminent signs of appearance 225

CHAPTER TWO THE SIRAH OF IMAM MAHDI (‘A) IN THE TIME OF APPEARANCE 231

1. The characteristics of Mahdawi's government in the Qur'an 231
2. The date of Imam Mahdi's appearance 238
3. The place of appearance and the beginning of insurrection of Imam (‘a) 238
4. A hesitation regarding the two lectures about proclaiming revolution 239
5. Proclaiming the goals of the insurrection 240
6. The Response of people to Imam's request of assistance and swearing allegiance to him 241
7. Departure of Imam towards Kufa and cleaning the inner front 242
8. Imam's entering to Bayt al-Maqdas and the descending of Prophet Jesus (‘a) 243
9. Killing the Impostor (Dajjal) and ending the sovereignty of the material civilizations 244
10. The Sirah of Mahdi (‘a), is identical to the Sirah of the messenger of Allah (s) 245
11. Reviving Sunnah and the marks of the holy Prophet (s) 245
12. The rigour of the Imam (‘a) with himself and his gentle behavior with people 246
13. The juridical Sirah 247
14. Sirah of the Imam in front of the religions 248

15. Fighting with innovations and the negation of the exaggerators and the false searchers 249
16. The administrative Sirah 250
17. Jihadi Sirah 250
18. The financial policy 252
19. The general image of the Mahdawi government in the religious texts 253

CHAPTER THREE A RAY FROM THE NARRATIONS OF IMAM MAHDI (‘A) 257

1. The word of the Imam (‘a) in relation to Tawhid and rejecting exaggeration 257
2. In expressing the reason of creation, sending the messengers, and determining the representatives 257
3. About the position of Imams (‘a) 258
4. About the order of the discipline of Imamate and the earth's not being empty of proof 259
5. The care of the Imam (‘a) for the Muslims 261
6. The permanent preparation of that Imam for appearance 262
7. Samples of the short answers of the Imam 262
8. Samples of the prayers and Ziyarats of the Imam 262
9. Samples of Ziarats of the Imam (‘a) 264

BIBLIOGRAPHY 267

PREFACE

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

The invaluable legacy of the Household [Ahl al-Bayt] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has provided the Muslim ummah with many scholars whom, following in the footsteps of Imams of the Prophet's Household (‘a), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defense of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the Ahl al - Bayt (‘a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shi‘ah

writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in editing and publishing valuable works by leading Shi‘ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet’s Household (‘a) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muhammad (s).

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam al-Mahdi, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to Irfan Mahmud with the cooperation of Sayyid Munthir al-Hakim its author and the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) Islamic Foundation, London, its translator. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation office. ✍

Cultural Affairs Department
The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

INTRODUCTION

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

In the Name of Allah (swt) and all praise to Him, He who gave everything its nature, then guided it aright. All peace and blessings be upon those whom He has chosen to be the guides of His creatures, especially the Seal of the Prophets and the Chief of the elite Messengers, the divinely chosen Prophet, Abu al-Qasim Muhammad, and the members of his Household, the blessed and well-selected ones.

As Allah (swt) the Almighty created man, He furnished him with the two elements of intellect and volition. By intellect, man can perceive things in order to detect the truth and distinguish it from falsehood. By volition, man can choose what is good for him in order to achieve his goals and purposes.

Allah (swt) the Almighty then decided intellect to be an argument against His creatures and helped them make use of their intellects through many aspects of His guidance. It is thus Allah (swt) Who taught man what he had not known,[1] showed him the way that takes him to his most proper perfection,[2] appraised him of the goal of his creation,[3] and caused him to exist in this world for the purpose of achieving this goal.

Through clear-cut texts, the Wise Qur'an clarified the signs, horizons, requirements, and ways to the divine guidance. It also demonstrated the causes and effects of this guidance and revealed its fruits and outcomes. In this way, the Holy Qur'an has provided us with a perfect view of divinity and its methods.

---

[1]. *Surat al-'Alaq, 96:5.*
[2]. *Surat al-Fatihah, 1:6-7.*
[3]. *Surat al-Najam, 53:42, and 51:56.*

In many of the texts of the Holy Qur'an, Allah (swt) the Almighty has revealed the reality, principles, characteristics, ways, epitomes, and outcomes of divine guidance. Some of these texts are as follows:

﴿ قُلۡ إِنَّ هُدَى ٱللَّهِ هُوَ ٱلۡهُدَىٰ ﴾

"... Say: Verily, the guidance of Allah, that is the (true) guidance."[1]

﴿ وَٱللَّهُ يَهۡدِي مَن يَشَآءُ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٖ مُّسۡتَقِيمٖ ﴾

"... For Allah guides whom He will to a path that is straight."[2]

﴿ وَٱللَّهُ يَقُولُ ٱلۡحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهۡدِي ٱلسَّبِيلَ ﴾

"... But Allah tells (you) the truth, and He shows the (right) way."[3]

﴿ وَمَن يَعۡتَصِم بِٱللَّهِ فَقَدۡ هُدِيَ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطٖ مُّسۡتَقِيمٖ ﴾

"... Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown that which is straight."[4]

﴿ قُلِ ٱللَّهُ يَهۡدِي لِلۡحَقِّۗ أَفَمَن يَهۡدِيٓ إِلَى ٱلۡحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَن يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّن لَّا يَهِدِّيٓ إِلَّآ أَن يُهۡدَىٰۖ فَمَا لَكُمۡ كَيۡفَ تَحۡكُمُونَ ﴾

"... Say thou: Allah alone guides towards the Truth. Is then He more worthy to be followed, or he who finds not guidance (himself) unless he is guided? What then is the matter with you? How judge ye?"[5]

---

[1]. *Surat al-An'am, 6:71.*
[2]. *Surat al-Baqarah, 2:213.*
[3]. *Surat al-Ahzab, 33:4.*
[4]. *Surat Aal 'Imran, 3:101.*
[5]. *Surat Yunus, 10:35.*

﴿ وَيَرَى ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡعِلۡمَ ٱلَّذِيٓ أُنزِلَ إِلَيۡكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ هُوَ ٱلۡحَقَّ وَيَهۡدِيٓ إِلَىٰ صِرَٰطِ ٱلۡعَزِيزِ ٱلۡحَمِيدِ ﴾

"And those to whom knowledge has come see that the (Revelation) sent down to thee from thy lord is the truth, and that it guides to the path of the Exalted (in Might), Worthy of all praise."[1]

﴿ وَمَنۡ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ ٱتَّبَعَ هَوَىٰهُ بِغَيۡرِ هُدٗى مِّنَ ٱللَّهِۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَهۡدِي ٱلۡقَوۡمَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴾

"And who is more astray than one who follows his own lusts, devoid of guidance from Allah?"[2]

The source of true guidance is exclusively Allah (swt) the Almighty, whose guidance must be the all-true guidance. It is thus Allah (swt) the Almighty who holds man's hand and guides him to the straight path and the flawless truth. These facts are supported by science; therefore, knowledgeable people realize and submit to these facts from top to bottom.

Philosophy and Tools of Divine Guidance

Allah (swt) the Almighty has placed in human beings the instinct for perfection and seeking beauty. He then showed him grace by guiding him towards proper perfection and loaded him with the favour of identifying the way to perfection. The Almighty says:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقۡتُ ٱلۡجِنَّ وَٱلۡإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعۡبُدُونِ ﴾

"I have created the jinn and mankind only that they may serve me."[3]

As true worship cannot be achieved without recognition, thus both recognition and worship have become the sole unique way, and the channel through which one reaches the peak of perfection.

---

[1]. *Surat Saba', 34:6.*
[2]. *Surat al-Qisas, 28:50.*
[3]. *Surat al-Dhariyat, 51:56.*

As Allah (swt) the Almighty equipped man with the senses of anger and lust in order to supply him with the fuel of movement towards perfection, man became well qualified for having a hold over his anger as well as the other way round, i.e. that anger, lust and desires, resulting from these two instincts would be able to take control over him. As a result, man, aside from his intellect, enlightened knowledge, amongst other tools, is in need of what guarantees him perfect insight, genuine intuition, and the right course so that it would be possible for him to achieve perfection. Once all these tools are accessible for him, the Creator would easily question him as to why he failed to achieve perfection, since the Creator has provided him with absolute guidance, and all means to choose with full volition the way to happiness and goodness available to him; therefore, nothing coerces man to opt for the way towards evil and misery.

Based on the abovementioned explanation, we may grasp the philosophy behind supporting man's intellect, by means of divine revelation with easily understood dictations and trustworthy distinguished figures to follow. These persons are embodied by the guiding leaders, whom Allah (swt) the Almighty has chosen to undertake the duty of directing His servants to the right guidance. Thus, the Almighty has designated these persons as leaders of true guidance and made it possible for all human beings to recognize these leaders, whom the Almighty also provided with all directions required in all domains of life.

The prophets and their divinely guided successors have always carried the banner of divine guidance since the dawn of human history, continuing to carrying it throughout the ages of human civilization and the generations that followed.

The Almighty has never left His servants without appointing for them an illuminated, enlightened guide, and a director. This fact is supported by clear-cut texts of the Divine Revelation. Some of these texts, which are supported by excellent reasoning, state that the earth will never be devoid of a person, representing conveying and defending the Divine arguments for the Almighty's creations:

﴿لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ حُجَّةُۢ بَعۡدَ ٱلرُّسُلِۚ وَكَانَ ٱللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا﴾

"...in order that mankind may have no excuse against Almighty Allah (swt)."[1]

Thus, a representative perfect divine figure existed before the creation and with the creation, and will endure to remain after the termination of the creation.[2] Moreover, even if only two beings remain alive on this globe, one of them must be appointed by the Almighty to be His Divine representation against the other. This fact has been undoubtedly stated by the Holy Qur'an that reads:

﴿ إِنَّمَآ أَنتَ مُنذِرٞۖ وَلِكُلِّ قَوۡمٍ هَادٖ ﴾

"... Thou art a warner only, and for every man a guide."[3]

The prophets, messengers, and their guiding divinely appointed successors undertake the mission of guidance at all levels. This process of guidance can be summed up in a set of correlated and integral missions, which can be put in the following points:

1. They receive the divine revelation in a perfect way and assimilate the divine mission in the most accurate manner. This process of reception stands for their perfect readiness for receiving the divine mission. For this reason, the divine selection of the Messengers must be one of the affairs that are related to Allah (swt) the Almighty alone. Revealing this fact, the Holy Qur'an declares:

﴿ ٱللَّهُ أَعۡلَمُ حَيۡثُ يَجۡعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُۥ ﴾

"Allah knoweth best with whom to place His Message."[4]

---

1. *Surat al-Nisa, 4:165.*
2. Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Saffar, Basa'ir al-Darajat, pp. 507-8, H. 3. S. 11; al-Nu'mani, Kitab al-Ghaybah, pp. 139, S. 9.
3. *Surat al-Ra'd, 13:7.*
4. *Surat al-An'am, 6:124.*

﴿ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَجۡتَبِي مِن رُّسُلِهِۦ مَن يَشَآءُ ﴾

"But Allah chooseth of His messengers whom He will ..."[1]

2. They convey the divine message to the people to whom they have been sent. The conveyance of the divine message is conditional upon the ideal competence of these Messengers, which is the result of their perfect comprehension and understanding of the divine message's details, goals, and requirements. Likewise, the Messengers' conveyance of the divine message is conditional upon their inerrancy, meaning they are too infallible to fall in mistakes, errors, and deviations. In reference to this point, Allah (swt) the Almighty states in the Holy Qur'an:

﴿ كَانَ ٱلنَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَٰحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنزَلَ مَعَهُمُ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ بِٱلۡحَقِّ لِيَحۡكُمَ بَيۡنَ ٱلنَّاسِ فِيمَا ٱخۡتَلَفُواْ فِيهِ ﴾

"Men were one community. God sent messengers to give glad tidings to the good and warn the bad. He sent the book in truth so they might judge justly in their disputes ..."[2]

﴿قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغۡوِيَنَّهُمۡ أَجۡمَعِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنۡهُمُ ٱلۡمُخۡلَصِينَ﴾

"He said: Then, by Thy might, I surely will beguile them every one, save Thy single-minded slaves among them."[3]

One of the missions of the Messengers is to create a nation that believes in the divine message, also preparing the individuals of this nation to support the guiding leaders for the purpose of realizing and putting into effect the goals of the divine message. Using the two terms of *tazkiyah* (purification) and *ta'lim* (education), many Qur'anic verses have referred to these two terms, summarizing the mission. For instance, the Holy Qur'an reads:

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[1]. *Surat Aal 'Imran, 3:179.*
[2]. *Surat al-Baqarah, 2:213.*
[3]. *Surat Saad, 28:82-83.*

﴿ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ وَٱلْحِكْمَةَ ﴾

"To purify them and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom."[1]

The Qur'anic term (*tazkiyah)* stands for the appropriate education toward perfection, which suits human nature. On the other hand, education requires the existence of a righteous archetype, possessing all elements of perfection. In this respect, Allah (swt) the Almighty says:

﴿ لَّقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ ٱللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلْيَوْمَ ٱلْأَخِرَ وَذَكَرَ ٱللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴾

"Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him that looks unto Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much."[2]

4. The Messengers are also required to protect the divine message from deviation, divergence, and digression throughout the period, which is valid for it has been decided by the Almighty. Once again, this mission requires scientific and mental competence, matching with the requirements in implementing this great mission.

5. Another mission of the Messengers is to fulfil the spiritual goals of the divine message and implant the moral values in the mentalities of humans, by way of putting into action the divine program and applying the laws of the religion to the human community through the establishment of a political entity, assuming administration of the affairs of the community, in accordance to the divine message sent to them. Achievement of these goals requires the existence of a wise and excellently courageous leader who must enjoy great perseverance and full acquaintance with the psychologies of the people, their social classes, their different ideological, social, and political tendencies, as well as the laws of administration, education, and norms. These qualities can be summed up in two features; namely, competence and infallibility. The achievement of these goals requires a scientific and

1. *Surat al-Jumu'ah, 62:2.*
2. *Surat al-Ahzab, 33:21.*

practical competent leader, one experienced in running the affairs of a global and religious state. Infallibility, which is identical to mental competence, is also required for protecting the religious leadership against any aberrant behaviour or misdeed that could negatively affect the progress of the leadership and mislead the masses in a way that is incompatible with the goals and purposes of the divine message.

Throughout generations, the prophets and their divinely selected successors have boldly embarked upon the course of guidance despite difficulties, suffering unbearable agonies for the sake of educating the people, as required by God. They have thus undergone various plights in order to carry out their mission, sacrificing their most precious things for their principles and beliefs. They have not retreated for a moment nor have they ever dallied.

Allah (swt) the Almighty crowned the relentless efforts of all of the prophets and their successors throughout the generations with the message of the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah (sawas). The Almighty thus imposed on the Prophet Muhammad (sawas) the greatest responsibility of guidance with all of its ranks and ordered him to work on putting into practice the goals of the divine mission. The Holy Prophet (sawas) took this rugged course with amazing steps and in the shortest period, achieved the greatest effect in the history of revolutionary uprisings and divine messages. The outcome of his blessed efforts in a period of twenty years can be summed up as follows:

1. He provided for mankind a perfect program resplendent with all elements of perpetuity and endurance.

2. He supplied mankind with all factors that save from aberration and deviation.

3. He created a Muslim community that believes in Allah (swt) as the one and only Lord; Islam as the chief principle, Muhammad (sawas) as the leader, and the religious law as the formula of life.

4. He established a Muslim state and a political entity that carries the pennon of Islam and implements the laws of God.

5. He demonstrated the brilliant feature of divine leadership, represented by his wise leadership.

In order to completely bring to fruition the goals of the divine message, it was necessary that:

A. The competent leader continuously apply the message, and protect it from acrimonious individuals awaiting calamities.

B. The process of the sound education endured throughout generations at the hands of scientifically and mentally competent educators who, just like the Holy Prophet, represented the most excellent exemplars in both morality and behaviour, comprehending and embodying the divine message in all of their activities.

For this reason, it was mandatory upon the Holy Prophet, according to the divine plan, to prepare elite individuals from among the immaculate members of his household, for leadership after his departure. He thus referred to these individuals by name and expressed the roles that they should play.[1] This was in order for them to continue with the great march of prophethood and remain divinely guided by Allah (swt) the Almighty, to protect the divine message continued by the Almighty against the distortions of misleaders and plots of the traitors. They were responsible in raising the next generations on the values determined by Allah (swt) the Almighty and concepts of the blessed religious law. Therefore, these individuals undertook the mission of explicating the features of these laws, revealing their secrets to humanity, to continue until Allah (swt) inherits the earth and all His creations are returned to Him.

The divine plan can be seen in many of the words of the Holy Prophet, like his famous saying: “I am leaving amongst you the two weighty (i.e. precious) things with which you shall never go astray, as

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[1]. See the Holy Qur'an, *Surat al-Ma’idah 5:67/3*. This holy verse reveals the divine command of designating to the next leadership of the Muslim community the person whose leadership would complete the divine message and who would fulfil the divine mission so that the sealing divine religion would be flawlessly perfect. Through the leadership of this divinely chosen person, God’s grace of guidance that He conferred upon humanity would be perfect in all of its ranks and thus the all-comprehensive and perfect religion of Islam would be the everlasting religion approved for all human beings.

long as you hold fast to them: the Book of Allah (swt) and the members of my household. They shall never separate from one another until they both join me at the Divine Pond."[1]

The Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (i.e. the Holy Prophet's household) have always been the best example of leadership and the real representatives of the divine plan. On many occasions, the Holy Prophet introduced them, by the command of the Almighty, as his successors, who should assume the leadership of the Muslim community after him. The behaviour of these twelve Imams represented actual Islam and the best examples of the divine message in the times that followed that of the Holy Prophet's era.

In view of this fact, it is necessary to study their lives in detail and as comprehensively as possible, because their behaviour and approach to life brought to light an all-inclusive portrait of the Holy Prophet's movement of the propagation for Islam, forcing its way deep in the community, despite the breach that occurred following the passing of the Holy Prophet. Yet, the Infallible Imams, although experiencing multiple attempts of elimination and dismissal from the political and social scene of the Muslim community, worked inexorably to awaken the masses, directing them towards the divine message through self-application of the laws of the religion, representing the manners of the Holy Prophet, attracting all mankind to his blessed message and its goals, without deviating from the universal institutions that control the progress and development of all human societies.

The lifestyles and manners of the orthodox Imams embodied in the best way the principle of steadfastness in the Holy Prophet's conduct; therefore, the masses began to gradually follow them and take their path in spite of the obstacles that were deliberately placed in their way. Moreover, the masses looked upon them as epitomes of true guidance and lanterns that lit up the path for those who sought the way of truth and believed in their divinely ordained leadership. Thus, the Holy Imams

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[1]. See al-Saffar, Basa'ir al-Darajat, pp. 433, H. 3; al-Maghribi, Da'a'im al-Islam, 1/28; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Fada'il al-Sahabah, pp. 15; Musnad Ahmad, 3/14 & 17; al-Hakim al-Nayshaburi, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn, 3/148. Moreover, this prophetic saying has been recorded in the majority of the most reliable reference books of both Sunni and Shia Muslims with differences in texts and through various ways of narration.

have always been the guides chosen by Almighty Allah (swt) and pioneers in winning His approval. They were steadfast in carrying out His commands and loved Him greatly being eager to fulfil His will in defending the message of the Messenger of Islam, and other elevated and distinguished figures pursuing perfection.

Their lives were full of troubles and they were devoted in their obedience to Allah. They dealt with the antipathetic ones with such tolerance, that they provided the best examples of steadfastness and self-sacrifice, dedicated in establishing the practice of the laws of Allah (swt) the Almighty. They preferred martyrdom with dignity, as opposed to survival with humility; and in doing so they fulfilled Allah's (swt) will upon enduring great struggle, severe tests and unbearable sufferings.

No historian or man of letters can ever touch on all of the inspiring aspects of their lives - taking into consideration the attempts to eliminate their effective roles in the protection of true Islam - nor could anyone claim to study their lives as perfectly as required. Thus, in this encyclopaedia, we can only attempt to reveal a few features of their lives and present snapshots of their historically recorded ways. However, we have done our best to introduce to the readers an all-inclusive view of the lives of the Holy Imams, in the hope that the Almighty will reward us. Surely, He is the patron of every success.

Our fourteen-volume encyclopaedia of "Beacons of Guidance" examines the emissary movement of the Fourteen Infallibles, beginning with the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sawas) and ending with the seal of the successors; Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-'Askari, the awaited Imam, may Allah (swt) hasten his relief and light up the earth with the luminosity of his justice and the sheen of his equity.

The common features to studying the life of each of these Fourteen Infallibles is to emphasize their individual and social emissary activities, reveal the social features and demands of their eras, and introduce the feats that were achieved under their leadership and some samples of their sayings.

As the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) undertook the task of publishing and introducing this encyclopaedia, abiding by presenting it in the most proper form, it has become a role-model of scientific study,

according to the associative methodology founded on the guidance of the Holy Qur'an and the most reliable reference books of historiography, which are indeed a splendid scientific treasury although people have neglected the majority of these reference books due to the premeditated plots that were hatched against the message of Islam and its blessed leaders. In the current age of wakefulness, it seems important for humanity in general and Muslims in particular to be acquainted with many hidden facts, although these facts are too bitter to accept and too shocking to believe. However, it seems appropriate to introduce these facts according to the Qur'anic method of propagation for Islam and "*enjoining truth and enjoining patience*."

The current book is dedicated to studying the life of Imam Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Mahdi (‘a); the Twelfth Imam, and the ninth in the list of the descendant Infallibles from the progeny of Imam Hussain (‘a). Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi (‘a*)* is the promised Imam to the whole global human society, and in particular to the Muslim Ummah, as he is the promised Imam (‘a) through whom the Almighty has promised to fulfill the Earth with justice as much as it was overwhelmed with injustice.

Finally, the (ABWA) Team is pleased to express gratitude to the author of this book, Sayyid Mundhir al-Hakim, Mr. ‘Irfan Mahmud who helped in writing this part of the encyclopaedia, Mr. Sayyid Muhammad Hashim al-Madani who checked the text and completed the references of this fifth edition. Our best thanks -for the final linguistic checking and for comparing it with the original manuscript- go to our brothers Hussain Rif'at al-Salehi and Jawad al-Tahir. And in addition we thank dear brother Quassim al-Baghdadi, who completed the digital typesetting, and to all of our brethren who contributed to the introduction of this book and worked for achieving the intended goal of the (ABWA) in publishing such material. Finally, we, the (ABWA) would like to mention our gratitude to the Islamic Foundation Team -in London- for their excellent work in translating this encyclopaedia into English; and pray that the Almighty Allah grants them all success and an excellent reward. Verily, He is the patron of success and reward.

Cultural Affairs Department
The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly

SECTION ONE

Chapter One
Imam Mahdi (‘a) in a Glimpse

Chapter Two
The Promised Mahdi (‘a) and the Signs of His Occultation in the Light of Religions

Chapter Three
The Promised Mahdi (‘a) and the Signs of His Occultation in the Holy Qur'an

Chapter Four
The Promised Mahdi (‘a) and the Signs of His Occultation in the Light of the Traditions Narrated by the Two Main Factions of Muslims

CHAPTER ONE
IMAM MAHDI (AS) IN A GLIPMSE

The subject of Imam Mahdi (‘a), whose reappearance is promised both by Islam and by the religions previous to Islam, is a human issue more than a religious matter; for this is an matter meticulously interpreting the need of mankind's wishes to become as completely fulfilled as possible.

With a firm belief in the Imamate of Hazrat Muhammad bin Hasan Mahdi (‘a), the Shi'ah religious conviction (following the twelve Holy Imams' conduct) appeared in 255 A.H., took charge of leadership in 260 A.H. and is still continuing. The responsibility it takes when dealing with different incidents clearly distinguishes it from other creeds today. What the followers of this creed believe is that the Holy Imam Mahdi (‘a) is observing universal changes and is waiting for the necessary conditions that need to be provided in this world before his reappearance. The energy of ignorant civilizations must be spent and mankind must ascend to a level that prepares both hearts and souls to receive divine guidance from a leader with the ability to lead the world exactly as Allah wishes.

This leader is none other than the last of the twelve Imams (‘a), whose Imamate had been approved and the good news of whom was forecast by the Holy Prophet of Allah (s), himself.

This great Imam (‘a) was born during very difficult times, which made it impossible for Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), his father, to announce his birth. Nevertheless, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), along with a number of other members of the Household (‘a), such as Hakemah and Naseem, witnessed his birth and were also able to express their joy and happiness.

Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) also informed some of his close companions and followers of the birth and life of the twelfth Imam (‘a), saying that he was indeed their twelfth Imam (‘a), the good news of whose

appearance was pronounced by the Holy Prophet of Allah (s). In the first five years of his life, Imam Mahdi (‘a) bore his responsibilities and carried out his activities, such as answering the various questions of his followers and appearing in calm places where malicious government officials could not reach him. Also, the Imam's (‘a) appearance immediately after the death of his father (‘a) removes any doubt about his birth and Imamate.

During his minor occultation, the Imam (‘a) dealt with different affairs and bore great responsibilities, all the time ensuring that government spies and their workers were unable to trace his activities. The Imam (‘a) provided the necessary grounds for leadership and distributed some of the tasks pertaining to this among religious scholars and intellectuals, these being the trustworthy people of Allah regarding what He has elucidated as right and wrong. These religious scholars became the successors of the Imam (‘a) during his major occultation and they performed their religious duties in the most efficient possible manner in the face of all the difficulties that came into being during the major occultation, so that they could provide the necessary grounds for the Imam's (‘a) movement of reformation, the news of which Allah the Exalted the High had already given to the nations.

The Imam's (‘a) major occultation began in 329 A.H. and still continues.

During his minor occultation, it seems the Imam (‘a) was hidden from the eyes of the people but, even so, he continued his activities, proving that he is the leader whom all mankind must follow. People must wait for his reappearance and turn towards world-wide peace.

While in minor occultation, Imam Mahdi (‘a) was in touch with his followers indirectly by means of his “four administrators.” However, the minor occultation period had to come to an end before the government could trace the Imam's (‘a) whereabouts and actions. In this way, the Islamic nation was deprived of any further relations with the “four administrators.” However, Imam Mahdi (‘a) continued with his responsibilities regarding his leadership of Islamic society, like a sun that has been hidden by clouds.

In his minor occultation, the Imam (‘a) left a great and very precious heritage for the people of Islam that is impossible to ignore.

During his major period of concealment, the Imam (‘a) fulfilled his role, dealing with the great responsibility pertaining to his leadership. He, along with others, awaits the time when Allah, the Exalted, the High will allow him to reappear; as a result, he shall come with all the potency and power that Allah, the Exalted, has provided him, and the earth will be filled with peace and justice as it is now filled with cruelty and oppression. Certainly, this will happen after all the necessary conditions are met, such as commanded forces and similar facilities along with the most suitable worldwide conditions. These conditions will prepare the human race for the Imam's (‘a) reappearance and resurrection as a divinely obedient leader. In this way, his great Islamic revolt will begin and will achieve the targets of a true religion; resulting in the domination and superiority of the religion of Islam over all others, despite this being contrary to the wishes of the dualists and polytheists.

CHAPTER TWO
THE PROMISED MAHDI (AS) AND THE SIGNS OF HIS OCCULTATION IN THE LIGHT OF PREVIOUS RELIGIONS

1. Having faith in a universal reformer; a natural and original human quality

Believing in the appearance of a religious reformer and his just and divine government is common to all divine religions[1]. The only difference observed in this regard is as to whom this universal religious reformer is; the one who will appear to complete the mission of all the Prophets (‘a).

In the first six chapters of his book entitled “Miftah Bab al-Abwab”, Dr. Muhammad Mahdi Khan expresses the views of the six divinely given religions regarding the appearance of the last Prophet (s) and the promised universal reformer. He states that each of the six religions pronounced the good news of this universal reformer's arrival as being in the future or towards the end of the world. They believe that such a person will appear, reform society, free it from oppression and evil and, as a result, will lead mankind to prosperity[2].

In “Thakhirat al-Abwab”, the author Mirza Muhammad Istarabadi also discusses the same issue in detail. He highlights some of the many narrations and good news recorded in different heavenly books regarding this very issue.

It is crystal clear that anyone who has ever researched whether the belief regarding a universal reformer is correct has come to admit that in the affirmative. Even the Hungarian orientalist, Goldshier, in his

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1. For more information refer to the publication “ma'ah al-Duktur Ahmad Amin”, by: Ayatullah Sheikh Muhammad Amin, **Zain al-Din** p. 13; the discussion regarding Mahdism and the Imam Mahdi (‘a).
2. Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi, **Mulhaqat ihqaq al-Haq** 29:621-622.

book "al-'Aqidah wa al-Shari'ah fi al-Islam"[1], also considers that this belief is deeply rooted in religious history. From the religious books of the Egyptians, Chinese, Mongols, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Hindus and African religions to those of the great three-fold religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the same belief and opinion has been reached on this topic[2].

2. Glad tidings about the reappearance of the great saviour in the light of the Holy Books

When one looks at the beliefs of these religions regarding the universal reformer one sees that the issue of the arrival of the great saviour has its roots deeply trenched within the explicit texts of their own holy books dealing with the subject, and that it has nothing to do with explanations and interpretations by the intellectuals of these religions regarding complicated religious texts; neither does it have any relation to the justifications and aspects which they have set forth in relation to this issue.[3]

Thus we come to realize how deep this belief is, and that it has been something that all Prophets (‘a) have preached about. This is because the call of all the Prophets (‘a), or at least the greatest of them, is considered a huge step towards providing the necessary grounds for the reappearance of the great universal reformer, who will appear and finalize the incomplete mission of all the Prophets (‘a).[4]

On the other hand, the good news about the certain appearance of the great universal reformer has also had its effects on the call of the

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1. **Al-'Aqidah wa al-Shari'ah fi al-Islam** p. 218; In this book, he discusses this issue as a non-Islamic deeply rooted mythology, but believes that all religions have the same belief, Ibid, p. 192. The newly developed denial among Muslims regarding the issue of Mahdism has its roots in the beliefs of such orientalists. Some Muslims such as Ahmad Amin have also followed them in their viewpoint.
2. Refer to: Dr. Mustafa Ghalib, Al-Imamah wa Qaim al-Qiamah, p. 270.
3. Sheikh Muhammad Sadiqi, Bisharat 'Ahdain, narrations and traditions related to the Promised Mahdi (‘a).
4. Refer to: Shahid Sayyid Muhammad Sadr (may his soul rest in peace), Tarikh al-Ghaibah al-Kubrah, discussions regarding the divine plans about the promised day before Islam, p. 251 onwards.

Prophets (‘a). It became an important motivating factor for the followers of the Prophets (‘a) while they strove to complete their missions. They were able to cooperate with each other to prepare mankind for the universal saviour.

It is due to this that the good news regarding the great saviour has been recorded in all religious texts and prophetic missions as a main driving force.

3. The profound belief of the the Saviour in Judaism and Christianity

Jews had faith in the appearance of a universal reformer, and this is recorded in the Torah and their other authentic religious books. Many contemporary researchers, especially western researchers such as George Rutherford in his book “Mela'en min al-ladhena hum ahya al-yaum lan yamoto abada”, and the American senator Paul Menzli in his book “man yajru ala al-kalam”, and the researcher Grace Halsel in her book “al-Nabuway wa al-siasah” along with many other researchers[1] have all discussed in detail about this belief among Jews.

So whoever wishes to research Judaism will find this belief mentioned there.

By means of the few above-mentioned, examples we wished to confirm this belief among the Jews, along with its political effects, outcomes and its consequences in making the Jews move forward, especially in the last few centuries, with the target of preparing themselves for the great universal saviour in whom they firmly believe.

The reason behind these movements is that the Jews believe that the necessary grounds for the saviour's appearance have a particular time period which started in 1914, which is also the start of the First World War. It follows the dispersion of the Jews in Palestine and the establishment of their government. The Jews believe these signs to be among the most important elementary stages for their promised saviour, and believe that returning to Palestine is the beginning of a determining war, which will eventually banish evil from the world.

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1. Refer to: Ahmad al-Wasiti, **Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) fi kitab al-muqadas** pp. 121-123.

This is when celestial rule will begin on Earth and will change it into a place similar to Heaven.[1]

Apart from the disagreements regarding the details of this belief among the Jews, what we certainly come to appreciate is that the belief of a universal saviour and reformer's arrival is one of the main beliefs with its roots deep in their religious texts. This belief is so strong and potential that the Jews have been able to plan a long-term strategy based on this very belief, in spite of some alterations in its details and proofs. For this, they have tried to unite all the Jews with differing thoughts, lines and sometimes contradictory targets and encourage them to use their potential and move towards achieving the goal, which according to their rabbis and religious leaders will provide the necessary grounds for the promised saviour to appear.

It is as clear as crystal that if this belief did not have its origins deep within Judaism and if it were not supported by the Jewish culture, it would never be able to cause such a great movement among the followers and forces of the Jews from different groups and ideals. Such a movement could not come into being as a result of newly established ideology with no roots in religious texts.

Likewise, relying on a number of verses and indications in the Torah and the Bible, Christians too believe the great saviour will appear. Christian scholars insist on establishing faith firmly based on the certain return of Jesus towards the end of the world to lead mankind after a great universal revolution. According to them, as a result of this revolution, the Earth will be ruled in peace and tranquillity ever after. The German priest, Wender, discusses this in his book "Mizan al-Haq."[2] Another belief, that for the establishment of his just government to bring peace and tranquillity the great saviour will use his power and sword, can also be found among some Christian groups.

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1. Lebanese magazine, Al-'Ahd, number, 685; an article entitled "harakat al-shahod yahuah, al-nash'at al-tanzim al-mu'taqid."

2. **Bisharat 'Ahdain** p. 261; taken from the book **Mizan al-Haq** by Wender, the German priest p. 271.

4. Belief in a universal saviour in the light of non-religious thoughts

Another notable point is that it is not only religions that believe in the universal saviour; the intellectual and philosophical schools of thought, too, have a firm belief that a universal saviour will certainly appear and will establish his peaceful and just government, bringing an end to all chaos and wars and spreading peace and tranquillity all over the world.

In human philosophy through history we find many descriptions considering this phenomenon as a certainty. The English writer, Bertrand Russell, for example, says: "The world is waiting for a reformer who will bring all the people of the world under the same flag and the same slogan."[1] Also, Albert Einstein, the famous scientist and physicist, with a worldly famous theory of relativity, says: "That day is not far when peace and tranquillity will fill the world and when people will live together as brothers and friends."[2]

Another viewpoint, which is even stronger and clearer, compared to the first two viewpoints, is that of the famous Irish writer George Bernard Shaw. He clearly mentions the good news of the universal saviour's arrival and says he must have been living for a long time before appearing - a viewpoint very close to the Imamite Shi'ahs' belief about Imam Mahdi (ʻa). To Shaw, this is an important part of the saviour's establishing his government. According to Dr. 'Abbas Mahmood al-'Aqad's quotes about him, Shaw says in his book "Superman" that the saviour is a living being with proper physical and extraordinary mental powers, and that he is a superior person who ascends above the level of the mean human being with almost three centuries of effort. Shaw states that this long period of life will help him to benefit from all that he has gained during these three centuries.[3]

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1 . Sayyid Abdul Rida Shahristani, **Al-Mahdi Mu'aud wa daf'a al-shubahat 'anhu** p. 6

2 . Sayyid Abdul Rida Shahristani, **Al-Mahdi Mu'aud wa daf'a al-shubahat 'anhu** p. 7

3. 'Abbas Mahmood al-'Aqad, George Bernard Shaw pp. 124-125; al-'Aqad explains Bernard Shaw's saying: "We clearly know that Bernard Shaw's

5. The Universal Saviour's long life in the light of human thought

The qualities and characteristics of the saviour which this Irish scholar and intellectual has compiled, such as physical and rational perfection, long life and the ability to gain experiences from different ages and eras that will enable him to bring great reformation among people, are very similar to those the Shi'ahs believe are Imam Mahdi's (‘a) qualities.

The issue of the superman's long life, to which Bernard Shaw refers, also strengthens the thought that the Universal Saviour, when he appears, must be old enough to bear his responsibilities in the best possible manner. [1] This matches the Shi'ahs' belief about Imam Mahdi's (‘a) long life. The only difference between Shaw's opinion and the Shi'ah belief in this regard is that, according to the Shi'ahs, the Universal Saviour has all the experiences necessary for him to bring peace and tranquillity from a very early age. He is always ready to carry his great responsibility, and is always supported by Allah the Exalted the High. He will be able to apply and utilize all his experiences and focus as soon as the conditions necessary for him to reappear are provided. As for his long life, it is so that his supporters and human society will gain experience and transfer this from one generation to another and also retain it them themselves.[2]

6. Having faith in Imam Mahdi (‘a) is a manifestation of a natural need

Having faith in the assured appearance of a Universal Saviour among all human beings shows how strong this belief is, with its roots deep in human nature. In other words, expressing this belief unveils a

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superman is not an impossible situation; and his call is based on a constant and concrete reality.” This saying has been recorded from al-'Aqad in **Al-Mahdi al-Muntazir fi al-Fiker al-Islami** p. 9, as well as in **Al-Mahdi al-Muntazir bain al-Tasawur wa al-Tasdiq** p. 81 written by Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Al Yasin.

1. For more information, please refer to the great research which Ayatullah Sadr carried out in **Relation to Imam Mahdi (‘a)** pp. 41-48, third edition, published by Dar al-Ta'aruf.

2. For further information, please refer to **Tarikh Ghaibat al-Kubra** p. 276 onward.

common human need and requirement. The basis for this belief is strengthened and developed with what humans have in their nature; this quality is nothing but the human being's love of perfection. So the Great Saviour's appearance and his establishing a just universal government on the promised day also leads mankind to the perfection they seek one way or another.

'Allama Shahid Baqir Sadr (‘a) has said: “Mahdi (‘a) is not only an Islamic personification, neither is he merely a religious symbol; rather he is the personification of all those needs and dreams which humans have always desired, no matter to what religion they aspire. Imam Mahdi (‘a) is an external expression of a natural inspiration to reach the unseen world, despite different chosen thoughts and means. By inspiration, they have come to understand that a great day has been promised to mankind, when the final destination and goal of all ages will be achieved; mankind, after a long passive journey in human history and after facing so many troubles for centuries, will come to experience peace and tranquility.

This is why we can clearly see that this belief in the unseen world and the Great Saviour's arrival, after a long interval, is not only related to those who believe in the world of the unseen as one of their religious rites. Rather, this belief has also been noticed among other people. We can witness this belief in the ideologies and schools of thoughts that strongly negate "belief in the unseen", such as dialectic materialism which views history in a contradictory way but which believes in the promised day; the day, when all contradictions will be removed and agreement and peace will replace them.

Also, we come to read that: "Humans have always lived with this mental experience throughout human history, which is the widest and the most general mental experience mankind has ever experienced."[1]

In this way, faith in the theory of "the return of the Promised Mahdi (‘a)" is the most widespread theory that human beings have experienced throughout history. It is because this theory is rooted in human instinct to desire perfection. The issue of the Promised Mahdi (‘a) and the Great Saviour is an answer to a human need.

1. **Bahth hawl al-Mahdi** pp. 7-8.

Therefore, it will certainly be proved, for human nature never demands things that do not exist and that cannot occur.

7. Human thought and Imam Mahdi's (‘a) occultation

According to human thought there is nothing to create doubt about the Great Saviour's long life. This is what strengthens one's faith in his occultation, too and this is what the followers of the Household (‘a) believe. As we observed in Shaw's statement, the human mind considers long life for the Great Saviour as something necessary to allow him to deal with his great responsibility in the best possible manner. Therefore basically the human mind never rejects the establishment of faith in a universal reformer, as this has a strong rational base.

Scholars have also discussed the permissibility of Imam Mahdi's (‘a) long life, saying that there is no contradiction between this and any rational laws. For example, Sheikh Tusi in "*Al-Fusul al-'Asharah fi al-Ghaibah*", Sayyid Murtada in "*Al-Muqni'ah fi al-Ghaibah*" and 'Allama Karajaki in "*Al-burhan ala tole umr Imam Zaman* (‘a) (and this book is published as the second volume of his "*Kanz al-Fawaid*"), Sheikh Tabarsi in " *'Ilam al-Wara*", Sayyid Sadr in his research about Imam Mahdi (‘a) along with many more scholars have discussed this issue; and we hardly find a book that does not discuss the issue of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and rationally reason about him.

8. Religious thought also believes in the appearance of a Universal Reformer after occultation

The followers of different religions certainly believe that a Universal Reformer will appear. They also believe that this appearance will happen after a lengthy period of occultation. The Jews believe that it is "Uzayr" or Minhas bin Azar bin Harun who will one day return as a Universal Saviour. According to the Christians, the occultation and reappearance belong to Jesus (‘a) and it is he who will reappear one day as a Universal Saviour. The Christians of Ethiopia believe that it is their king Theodor who will return as "Mahdi" towards the end of the world. Hindus believe in Vishnu's return; Zoroastrians believe it is

Ushider[1]. The Buddhists wait for Buddha, while another group believes prophet Ibrahim (‘a) will return. There are so many other religions with such a belief, too.[2]

In this way, the occultation before the Universal Saviour's reappearance is not something new for any of the heavenly brought religions. No logical person can ever claim that this opinion and belief is based on superstition and myth; superstitions and myths cannot appear among all religions as an original thought with none of the scholars of these religions negating it. On the other hand, no scholars of the divine religions have denied the theory of occultation. The only thing on which they disagree is the identity of the Universal Saviour, because the followers of each of these religions have accepted the hidden Saviour in the light of the teachings of their own religions and have rejected him according to other religions.

This is what unveils a common belief in all divine religions that has come into being by divine inspiration. Moreover, the Prophets' (‘a) experiences supported this opinion; many occultations are found among Prophets (‘a) too. For example, see the occultation and return of prophet Ibrahim (‘a) and prophet Musa's (‘a) occultation and return among his nation after so many years while he was living in Midian. Also prophet Isa (‘a) is in occultation and will return towards the end of the world, and this is what the holy verses of the Qur'an also confirm. With this opinion finding its way into the Prophet's (‘a) hadith, Muslims have also accepted this opinion. For example, the Sunnites also believe in prophet Ilyas' occultation; and the Mufti of Haramain Sharifain Ganji Shafi'i have also explained this belief in the twenty-fifth chapter of "*Al-bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman*." He has also indicated the Sunnites' belief in Hazrat Khidir's (‘a) occultation and that his occultation will continue until Imam Mahdi's (‘a) reappearance towards the end of the world and that he will appear as Imam Mahdi's (‘a) minister.[3]

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1. Certainly the Zoroastrians' saviour is Soshians or Soshiant, who will return after Ushider or Ushidermaah. Refer to: Jamasbnameh.
2. For example, refer to: Sayyid 'Amidi, **difa'a an al-kafi** 1:181; **Ihqaq al-Haq** 13:3-4.
3. **Al-bayan fi akhbar Sahib al-Zaman** pp. 149-150.

The inspiring and widespread theory of occultation of the Universal Saviour among previous religions indicates heavenly explanations regarding this issue. We can also observe this in the example about prophethood in the journey of dreams in scripture. We can see how the Sunnite researcher Sa'id Ayub applied that example to Imam Mahdi (‘a), according to Shi'ah belief.

However, the disagreement about the identity of the hidden Great Saviour has been caused by different narrations regarding the occultation of some of the Prophets (‘a) and the narrations about the universal reformer's occultation. Different motives have been involved in this issue, which we will discuss in the forthcoming chapters.

9. Disagreement about the identity of the Universal Saviour

In the light of the previous discussions, what we have come to realize is that the theory of the promised day forms a part of all divine religions. The scholar and researcher, the Grand Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi, has written in the preface of the thirteenth volume of Ihqaaq al-Haq: "One should know that all nations, religions and castes, except a few, have agreed on the return and reappearance of a divine and heavenly ruler who will come and reform that which has been destroyed, remove oppression from the surface of the earth and will bring justice which had been covered by darkness and oppression to light. Their only disagreement is on who this reformer is; some consider him to be prophet ʻUzayr (‘a), some Jesus Christ (‘a) and prophet Ibrahim (‘a). Another group among the Muslims considers the reformer to be from the offspring of Imam Hasan (‘a) or Imam Hussain (‘a).

Now we see that all the religions and different castes are in agreement regarding the certainty of the Great Saviour's occultation and reappearance. Their only disagreement is about his identity. What we need to know now is the origin of this disagreement.

Seemingly, this variance is due to the following two elements:

1. Unjust explanations and interpretations of the narrations based on the external affects of those explicit texts and the good news.

2. The sentimental effects or the prejudice of the followers of every religion or caste about their own respected people and own symbols.

In other words, among these people, the identity of the universal reformer is not based on explicit texts or revelation. Rather they had already thought of a favourite personality and have then attempted to apply the narrations to their imagined hero; for this, they have not been afraid to explain the narrations in their own way rather than seeking and seeing the truth.

Many political reasons and elements can also be added to this. We are not in a position to discuss them all. However, most of them are clearly recognized whether regarding previous religions or the different sects of the religion of Islam. The main thing we wish to say is that considering what has been mentioned in the divine revelation and the Holy Prophet's (s) narrations, these have proved the errant followers wrong and the justification for the continuation of life has removed the difference and permissibility of their insistence on their timeworn beliefs.

As for the first element, faulty interpretation of the narrations and good news of the divine religion, one should say: "These narrations and traditions of the Prophets (‘a) and their administrators about the Universal Saviour speak of the hidden issue - a personality who will reappear in the future; these narrations also speak of the historical role; that he will perform the greatest and the best actions in the history of mankind; he will fulfil the greatest human requirements. Mankind always wants to explain hidden things in a way that they can be touched and felt. Moreover, every nation loves its own religion, the symbols of its religions and whatever and whoever has inclined to their religion. As a result, they wish this great historical personality to be someone from among their nation.

Hence, there will come into being a disagreement about the identity of the Universal Saviour; the followers of every religion find justifications for the hidden personality who will one day return. They will find these justifications from among the undeniable explicit texts and the revelation which their own scholars and leaders have also believed in and have discussed. On the other hand, their love for their religions, whether or not they are aware of this, their love for the symbols of their religions, and also their great enthusiasm about the

Great Saviour being someone from among them, make them believe and feel proud that this historical Great Saviour will be someone who will rise from among their ranks.

10. Confusion amongst the experts with regards to the interpretation of those glad tifings

This is how the followers of every religion have tried to apply the characteristics and qualities mentioned in the narrations and other good news about the universal reformer to their own favourite personality or to someone who is close enough to their religious symbols. If some of the characteristics and qualities mentioned about the Great Saviour do not match what the followers of these religions have in their texts, they are not afraid to alter their texts; sometimes they even deny the authenticity of their contradictory texts, so that the narrations, the good news and other qualities of the Universal Saviour match the qualities of their pre-designated hero. Another important point to be discussed here is that these people have mixed good news and other signs referring to the reappearance of a prophet or a saviour in a certain period of time with those narrations, good news and signs that indicate the Universal Saviour appearing towards the end of the world.

11. A technical method to solve this disagreement

Now that we have ascertained the elements regarding the identity of the Universal Saviour, it is easier to determine a method to solve the disagreements in this regard; it is also possible to understand who the real Universal Saviour is and we can prove this in correct and logical way. To reach this goal, we can explain the points one by one in the following manner:

1. By separating the narrations and the good news that are particularly related to the Promised Saviour who will appear towards the end of the world, from the narrations that have been issued about particular Prophets (‘a) and their administrators. Points must not be neglected. Firstly, one should only rely on the original and explicit texts of the narrations and the good news that relate to the issue. Another point is that we can derive evidence from the narrations and from their original sources and origins. Thirdly, when analyzing the narrations

and the good news, one should rely on the Prophets' (‘a) and their administrators' responsibilities and goals along with their proven historical conduct and on whatever is needed to understand the constant role and responsibility of the promised personality as a Universal Saviour.

2. Determining the qualities and particularities that the explicit texts and other good news mention regarding the Promised Saviour, and then assembling them to create a clear picture and personality of the Universal Saviour, without becoming preoccupied; otherwise this will affect the result of the work.

3. After the clear picture extracted from the qualities and specialties mentioned above, the process will commence of understanding the historical qualities and realities as proof of the promised Universal Reformer. Then we will compare each of the proofs taken from the good news and explicit texts with the picture that we have imagined. After completion of the first two stages, we will get a clear picture. The result will be the actual proof of the Universal Saviour.

12. The Shi’ah version of interpreting the Saviour: Al-Mahdi (‘a) and presenting the solution to all disagreements

As we will explain later, all the heavenly good news recorded in the divine books guide all the people to Mahdi (‘a), who is described and believed in among the followers of the Household of the Prophet (‘a). Different research about the texts of this good news also confirms this saying.[1]

Hence, the Shi'ahs' belief about Mahdi (‘a) needs wider research and studies to find the actual proof of the Universal Saviour. Certainly this belief is based on the narrations and good news mentioned in the holy books, even if this new belief is achieved by tracing the old followers of the older religions.

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1. Such books as: Sheikh Muhammad Sadiqi, Bisharat 'Ahdain and its Arabic translation by the author himself published as "Al-Bisharat wa al-Muqarinat"; and Ali Akbar Isfahani's Bisharat Sahuf Aasmani beh Zahor Hazrat Mahdi (‘a); and Muhammad Jawad Mughniah, Al-Mahdi al-Muntazar wa al-Aql.

As an example, we will now discuss the effect of understanding the research of Qadi Jawad Sabati, and scholar of the twelfth century A.H. Firstly, he was a Christian scholar, but after research came to understand Islam. On his first encounter with Islam, he came to know Sunism and converted to it. He wrote his famous book "*Al-Barahin al-Sabatiah*", in which he rejected Christian belief and proved that their religion has been altered. He used material from Christian books to indicate this.[1]

13. Al-Qadi al-Sabati's opinion

Qadi Sabati based his opinion on good news recorded in the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament and then studied the Jewish and Christian interpretation of this good news. He rejected the Jewish and Christian interpretation of the good news. Finally he arrived at the view that: "This good news is explicitly speaking of Mahdi (‘a); all the scholars have consensus on this point that when making a decision or judgment, he will not make a judgment as soon as he completes hearing the case, nor will his decisions be according to mere appearance; rather he will make judgments dealing with the hidden unseen aspect of the issues and cases and this is something which has never happened before with any of the Prophets (‘a) or their administrators."

After analysis of the narration, he writes: "The Muslims have disagreed about Imam Mahdi (‘a), but as for our companions, the Sunnites, we believe: "he will be someone from Fatima's (‘a) progeny. His name will be Muhammad, his father's name will be Abdullah and his mother's name Amina."

However, the twelve Imams' (‘a) followers believe: "His name is Muhammad, son of Hasan 'Askari, who was born in 255 A.H. from

1. Mirza Hasan Noori, **Kashf al-Istitar** p. 84; another and even greater book is that written in six volumes under the title of "Anis al-'Ilam fi Nasaratul Islam" by a great Armenian Christian writer who converted to Islam and Shi'aism. He wrote this book to answer the Islamic scholars living towards the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries in Persia. In the same book, he was named Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Fakher al-Islam. This title was given to him by Isfahan's scholars of that time as an appreciation of his efforts in completion of the volumes.

Imam Hasan 'Askari's (‘a) family, his mother was named Nargis, in Samarrah at the time of Mu'tamid 'Abbassi and then disappeared in…[1] Then he reappeared and soon after disappeared again, which is known as the major occultation; after this occultation, he will not reappear until Allah the Exalted the High wishes. And since the Imamite Shi'ahs' belief so matches what is mentioned in this historical document, and neglecting all religious jealousy, I just want to defend Hazrat Muhammad's (s) nation. This is why I am telling you that what the Imamites believe about Mahdi (‘a) is very similar to this explicit historical text.[2]

We can see when discussing this issue how the great scholar with sufficient knowledge of Christianity has applied it to Mahdi the Awaited (‘a) according to Shi'ah belief and how he has preferred the opinion of the Household's (‘a) sect to the sect to which he was also connected and we can see how he considers the good news of the book “Isaiah” with Shi'ah belief, although when converting to Islam, he did not show an inclination to Shi'aism.

To this scholar the real proof of the Universal Saviour was the viewpoint of the Imamite Shi'ahs about Mahdi the awaited one (‘a). Maybe he would never be able to understand the real proof for the awaited Mahdi (‘a) through the afore-mentioned good news, without enough knowledge of the Imamite point of view in this regard. In any case, he did not have the necessary knowledge; he could just reject the wrong and deviated beliefs of the Christians or could completely neglect this issue; or, as a third option, he could benefit from the logical aspects of the good news to prove the awaited Mahdi (‘a).

When consulting other scholars we can see this situation repeating itself regarding the good news. In particular, people who have converted to Islam and have a chance to study the Shi'ah sect can

1. What is certain is that Imam Mahdi's (‘a) occultation period after the death of his father Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) lasted for 69 years. Maybe Sabati left this part blank so that he fill in the exact date when it was available and then forgot to write it and the book was published with this blank remaining as it is.

2. **Kashf al-Astar** p. 85; in this book, he has written that third editions of **Al-Barahin al-Sabatiah** were already printed before **Kashf al-Astar** was published.

easily understand what the real proof is for the Saviour mentioned in their books. The application of what they had already read in their books regarding the awaited Mahdi (‘a), in whom the followers of the Imamite Shi'ahs believe, has encouraged them to research this.

'Allama Muhammad Sadiq Fakher al-Islam's work is another good example of such research. He was first a Christian but then converted to Islam and accepted the Shi'ah sect, later writing his encyclopaedia under the title of “Anis al-'Alam”, in which he rejected Jewish and Christian ideas.[1] In this book he analyzed this joyous news and applied it to the personality of Imam Mahdi (‘a).

Another similar example is that of 'Allama Muhammad Rida Ridaei, who had been a Jewish scholar and researcher who subsequently left Judaism and converted to Islam. He is the author of “*Manqul Ridaei*.” In this book, he also researched the joyous news and came to the same conclusion.

14. The heavenly glad tidings can only be applied to Shi’ah version of al-Mahdi (‘a)

Whoever considers the text of this joyous heavenly news in detail will certainly come to see that this good news speaks of the qualities and specialties which can only be applicable to Mahdi (‘a) due to the qualities mentioned about him in Shi'aism. Hence those with little or insufficient knowledge about this belief can never understand the real proof of which this good news speaks. For example, we can clearly see this in the writings of the interpreters of the Bible in the first or seventeenth journeys in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelations of St John. They insist that the person whose arrival is described in these verses has not yet been born, because these verses are very easy to explain and their meanings are very clear for everyone. However, the time at when the Saviour will appear has been left unstated and passive and will be known by the time the

1. **Bisharat 'Ahdain** p. 233; the author of the books says: the above-mentioned personality was a well-known Christian scholar with a great number of followers, who converted to Islam after much research. He wrote many books, one of which is the one mentioned above. It is said that it is the best book to reject the Jewish and Christian ideas.

Saviour appears.[1] Meanwhile, these verses speak of the divine government which this Saviour will establish all over the world, and with which he will give an end to the devilish influence forever. This is the same responsibility which other good news has called the main responsibility and cause of the Universal Saviour's movement. However, the interpreters of the Bible have failed to apply these qualities and good news to the proof that they have themselves chosen for the Great Saviour, who according to them is none other than Jesus Christ (‘a); John's good news is that of Jesus Christ (‘a) himself, and it is Jesus (‘a) himself giving the good news of the Great Saviour's arrival. Since, the Christian scholars did not know about the Shi'ah sect and their belief about the Universal Saviour, they could never find reliable proof for the good news.

15. Occultation of the Twelfth Imam (‘a) and the glad tidings

Moving on, we encounter another researcher from amongst the Sunnites, who, with his considerable knowledge about the Shi'ahs' belief about the Mahdi the awaited one (‘a), has been able to find the real proof for what has been recorded in the Bible about Mahdi the awaited one (‘a). This researcher is Sa'id Ayub. In his book “*Al-Masih al-Dajjal*”, he writes about the verses in this regard:

“Ka'ab says: ‘It is mentioned in the Prophets' (‘a) journeys: there is no fault in Mahdi's (‘a) action.' Then this saying has been interpreted by the words: I witness that I have found this writing as it is in the books of the People of the Book. They have researched and explained the news about Mahdi (‘a), just as they have researched about the narrations of his grandfather the Prophet of Allah (s) too. The narrations of the journey of dreams are about a woman from whose generation will come twelve men. Then it indicates another woman who is the mother of the twelfth of the men; she is the woman who gives birth to the last of the twelve men.' It is mentioned in the journey: ‘This woman will face a dangerous enemy.' In this journey, the enemy of this woman is called “Tanin”, which is a code-word. It says: ‘When about to give birth to her son, Tanin will stand against her so that he can eat her child as soon as it is born.”[2] It means that

1. **Bisharat 'Ahdain** p. 264.
2. **The journey of dream** 12:3.

the government wanted to kill the child after its birth. Berkeley has interpreted these verses from the Bible saying: 'When the dangerous enemy attacks the pregnant woman, Allah takes the child and preserves him." The context of the verse is: "Allah will steal the child."[1] i.e. Allah will hide the child from the eyes of the enemies. Berkeley has also used the same words in his interpretations.

Then we read in the journey that this child's occultation will last for 1,260 days[2]; and this is a mysterious period for the people of the book. Then talking about the lineage of the woman in general, Berkeley says: 'Tanin starts a bloody war with the descendants of the woman'. In the journey, too, it is recorded that: 'Tanin becomes angry with the woman and decides to open a battlefield against the descendants of the woman who protect Allah's commands."[3]

After discussing the above-mentioned issue, Sa'id Ayub says: "Whatever is recorded in the above lines are exactly the qualities of Mahdi ('a) and exactly according to what the Twelve Imamite Shi'ahs believe about him. In the footnotes, he has explained these signs in even more detail and has applied them to Mahdi ('a) of the Household ('a).[4]

16. The glad tidings in the divine book and the qualities of al-Mahdi ('a)

Another notable thing about the good news recorded in the Bible is that it discusses certain qualities of the awaited Universal Saviour which can only be applied to the Shi'ah Mahdi ('a), as proved in history.

These clear signs about him show Allah the Exalted the High's wisdom; He who has indicated the clearest and most manifest qualities of the Universal Saviour and has smoothed the path for others with the clearest signs so that they can understand the actual

1. **The journey of dream** 12:5.
2. This is a mysterious period. In the Hebrew language with the exact translation, we read: "He is hidden from the eyes of Tanin for a period, two periods and half of a period." Refer to: **Bisharat al-'Ahdain** p. 263.
3. **The journey of dream** 12:13.
4. Sa'id Ayub, **al-Masih al-Dajjal** pp. 379-380; taken from al-Mahdi al-Muntazar fi al-fikr al-Islami, **Markaz Risalat publications** pp. 13-14.

proof of the Divine Saviour. For example, we can see in this good news, the dangers threatening their leaders which finally resulted in the occultation of the twelfth Imam's (‘a) occultation. Also, the good news has insisted that the Imam (‘a) in occultation is under Allah's custody before his reappearance. It is as clear as daylight that believing in the awaited Mahdi (‘a) is one of the main beliefs of the Imamite Shi'aism. This is why, in this above-mentioned good news, this has been clearly indicated, so people will easily find the real proof.

This is not the only time when the good news has indicated the Imamite Shi'ah beliefs. Rather they have touched other Imamite beliefs, too, regarding the Universal Saviour. For example, Imam Mahdi (‘a) is the twelfth Imam of a glorious chain. In the mentioned good news recorded in the Bible such as the Hebrew text of the journey of creation, we read[1] that in it Allah the Exalted the High has promised Abraham (‘a) to continue and connect Ismail's (‘a) generation to that of Muhammad (s) and the twelve leaders from among his holy Household (‘a). It is as clear as daylight that in addition to the above-mentioned hadiths, whose authenticity has been confirmed by all Muslims,[2] the narrations indicating that the twelve leaders from Ismail's (‘a) offspring will come one after another, can only refer to the twelve Shi'ah Imams (‘a); this belief is particularly related to this sect (Shi'ahs) and has been recorded in history with their names. Hence the Shi'ah sect is also known as "the Twelve Imamite sect".

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1. **Journey of creation** Ch. 17, ver. 20, 22 and 23.
2. Refer to: Ayatullah Sheikh Lutfullah Safi, Muntakhab al-Athar fi al-Imam al-Thani 'Ashar, First chapter: in this chapter we find 271 hadiths recorded from authentic Muslim reference books related to different tribes. These narrations speak of the Prophet (s) saying that the Imamite will be that of these twelve people from among his Household (‘a) which will continue till the Day of Judgment. In these narrations, their names have been clearly indicated and it clearly states that the first of them will be Imam Ali (‘a) and the last of them will be Imam Mahdi (‘a). Then Ayatullah Safi has recorded in this chapter a historical and posterior explanation, in which he proves that these hadiths are not applicable to anyone other than the twelve Imams (‘a) of the Shi'ahs.

17. The glad tidings of the heavenly books and Imam Mahdi's (‘a) qualities

This good news clearly refers to Imam Mahdi (‘a) including such titles as "al-Qa'im".[1] For example, in the following good news from Isiah's journey we read something which from Qadi Sabati's point of view can only be applied to Mahdi (‘a) and the Shi'ah beliefs about him:

1. Allah's soul, the core of wisdom and understanding, the power of consultation and strength, the soul of understanding and fearing Allah will all enter him.

2. His only pleasure will be fearing Allah and he will never make a judgment based merely on what he sees and on what he hears.

3. He passes judgment for the oppressed and helpless based on justice and deals with the earth seriously and the hypocrites will die from his words.

4. During his rule, the wolf and the lamb will live together peacefully. The leopard and goat, the calf and lion will live together in peace, and they will all be led by a little child.

5. No sin and bad action will be taken on any of the holy mountains, because at that time understanding Allah will cover the earth as it is now covered by the rivers.

6. In such a time "al-Qa'im" will rise for the nations, who were waiting for them, and will rise to a great position."[2]

Among the other titles of Imam Mahdi (‘a), used in the good news is "Sahib al-Dar" (the owner of the world),[3] and the good news speaks of waiting for the Universal Saviour. Moreover, it has been said that the Universal Saviour is not particularly related to the Christians. This

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1. This title is particularly used for the Purified Imams (‘a) and when used, it means to the Shi'ahs' twelfth Imam, Imam Mahdi the Awaited (‘a). Refer to: Ayatullah Mirza Hussain Noori, **al-Najm al-Thaqib** 1:211; taken from its Arabic translation. Mirza Noori has claimed that this title has been used in the Book of Psalms along with other books. He has recorded this saying from "Thakhirat al-Albab" of Sheikh Muhammad Istar 'Abadi.
2. **Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) fi Kitab al-Muqadas** pp. 123-127.
3. **Al-Najm al-Thaqib** 2:198.

good news speaks of his sudden appearance. These words have been recorded in the Gospel according to St Mark 35: 13.[1]

Another quality mentioned is "the revenger of Imam Husayn's (‘a) martyrdom, who will be martyred near the bank of the Euphrates. This is mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah, 46 / 2-11".

In his book "al-Kitab al-Muqaddas tahtul Majhar", Ustad Ardani 'Auda Mahawish confirms this, writing: "This good news is certainly related to Mahdi (‘a) who will take revenge for Imam Husayn's (‘a) martyrdom".[2]

There are many other examples. However, we shall refrain from discussing them all.

18. How to understand the identity of the Saviour in the light of the glad tidings

In the light of what we have said till now, we can say that these signs and good news make us understand that the Universal Saviour, the good news of whose arrival has been given by all divine religions, is none other than Imam Hasan 'Askari's (‘a) son Imam Mahdi (‘a). This is what the Shi'ahs believe too. This is because the good news cannot be applied to the beliefs of other religions and sects. As a result, we can say that none of the above-mentioned religions has set forth merely a dismal sketch, and they have indicated qualities and specialties which can apply to none other than Imam Mahdi (‘a). Hence this is again testament to what the Shi'ahs believe.

It will suffice to indicate evidence recorded in the Old Testament and New Testament - "journeys of Torah and different Bibles" for our topic as Judaism and Christianity are known as the two most authentic religions before the advent of Islam. Another reason is that Jewish and Christian scholars have carried out so much research on both the Torah and the Bible and many books and articles have been written regarding these. These writings have been translated into

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1. **Bisharat al-'Ahdain** p. 277.
2. **Al-Kitab al-Muqadas tahtul Majhar** p. 50; taken from **Dif'a 'an al-Kafi** written by: **Sayyid Samir al-'Amidi** vol. 1, For further information about these good news, refer to: **Ahl al-Bayt fi Kitab al-Muqadas** pp. 185-186.

many languages and are readily available today; although it will be excellent to rely on the Hebrew copies of both Books, because there is a possibility of mistake in their translations.

However, relying on the good news recorded only in these two Divine Books does not mean that no similar good news is recorded in other books. On the contrary, there are many similar examples among other religions and sects that are even clearer, logical and in more detail. Specific research carried out in this regard has discussed them all, but these religions and sects are not publicly known by all people, nor are their religious books. Also, many of them have never been translated. Moreover, the examples we are about to use from the Old and New Testaments strongly indicate what we are discussing. Those interested in learning more in this regard should refer to the specific books and other sources to which we shall refer while discussing our topic in the forthcoming lines.

19. Relying on the glad tidings in the books of bygone religions and the issue of distortion

There are two further issues which require discussion before we conclude and present the results of our discussion so far:

Firstly: The first issue is how can we rely on and bring logic and reasons from the books of other religions to prove such an important issue as the identity of the Universal Saviour and to prove that he is none other than Imam Mahdi (‘a), son of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) and to prove this belief is correct and to relate it to Allah the Exalted the High, while all Muslims firmly believe that these books have already been altered and changed.

We believe that a good answer to this question can be presented with a little consideration on different aspects of the issue and the answer can be summarized as follows:

1. The Household's (‘a) belief about the Awaited Mahdi (‘a) and many rational reasoning's, the Holy Verses of the Qar'an, the authentic hadiths of the Prophet (s) and the historical conduct of the Shi'ah Leaders - the Imams (‘a) - have been already proved and have been discussed in detail in the books regarding belief. Hence, relying on the good news recorded in the divine books of other religions is

only brought as further reasoning and evidence to confirm the reasoning about the Universal Saviour (‘a) in the above-mentioned sources. Therefore, if the extra reasoning is completely removed, the result still remains as it is based on other foundations. Meanwhile, one cannot doubt the authenticity of this belief, even if one believes that some of its basis stems from altered divine books.

2. Some other results can also be set out by analyzing this type of good news. One of them is to lead the followers of other religions towards the truth and the real divine reformer with the help of their own books, these being some of the best means for them. Another point is that insisting on this issue in all other religions shows the universal aspect of the issue of Mahdawiat and creates another way to bring all the religions together and nearer to each other; this possible way is none other than via the Universal Saviour whom all the people in the world await.

3. No one can claim that everything in the books of previous religions has been altered; rather the Muslims believe that only some parts of those books have been changed. Therefore, whatever has been recorded in the previous Divine Books and confirmed in the Qur'an and Sunnah is believed to be correct and unaltered.

20. Relying on the glad tidings which Islam has confirmed

1. One of the most certain things in Islam is that the Prophet of Allah (s) has pronounced the good news of the coming of the Promised Mahdi (‘a), explaining that he will be someone from among his Household (‘a) and one of Hazrat Fatima's (‘a) offspring.[1] Thus we can say that the good news in previous divine books about this issue is confirmed and has not been altered; there is no harm in benefiting from them or relying on them as proofs unless contradictions are found between them and Islamic learning.

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1. The research of some of the Sunnite scholars such as Imam Shokani in **Al-Tawdhih fi tawatir ma jaa fi al-Muntadhar wa al-Dajjal wa al-Masih**, and Barzangi in his book **Al-Isha'at fi Ashrat al-Sa'ah** and Kashmiri in his book **Al-Tasreeh** and other researchers have confirmed these traditions to be the progressive hadiths.

2. Though the Holy Book itself has given the good news of a divine and universal government that will be established towards the end of the world, there are many verses in the Holy Qur'an that clearly speak of the presence of the Promised Mahdi (‘a). They also speak of his certain occultation. We will discuss this issue in the following discourse.

This is also what confirms the content of the good news recorded in the books of the previous religions; it stems from the same source as that of the Holy Qur'an. As a result, we can confirm the authenticity of this good news and say that it has not been changed. In this situation, there is no harm in relying on it; it confirms rather than rejects the verses of the Qur'an.

3. Some of this good news has also indicated and relates to living external reality and to proven historical events. In other words, there are some historical events that have occurred as mentioned in those books regarding them, such as the good news of the Divine Saviour being the twelfth Imam (‘a) from Ismail's (‘a) offspring, and his being the son of one of the handmaidens, and born under severe political conditions that threaten his life. Allah protects him and hides him from the eyes of oppressors and the cruel people until the promised day. All these sayings tell us of an event which happened at a particular time, and history has witnessed this. This is another proof of the validity of this good news, because it has been identically proved that the good news was prepared and written before the event had occurred; one must not doubt that the writing was a prediction of the unseen; and could be issued only by someone connected to Allah the all-Knowing. In this way, we can be assured that this good news is correct and unchanged and can rely on it as good proof of our claim.[1]

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1 The same rule also applies to the honourable hadiths of the Prophet of Allah (s) and his holy Progeny (peace be upon them all), in which they give the news of Imam Mahdi (‘a) as son of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) as well as the news of his occultation. Considering that these hadiths were issued a century before the Imam's (‘a) birth and occultation and were later proved correct, this can make us believe that of which these narrations are speaking is correct, even if we are doubtful about the chain of narrators; the historical reality that has now confirmed that these predictions are true is the best

21. Effects and influence of the glad tidings of other religions in the belief of Mahdism

One can criticize, saying that if we rely on these predictions and good news to prove the Shi'ah belief about the Awaited Mahdi (‘a) it will create a doubt in our minds about the Shi'ah belief and that the belief has been taken from Judaism and from other altered religions which has now made its way into Islam and Shi'aism.

We can answer this doubt with what we have said above, namely that this criticism is acceptable only when the Imamite Shi'ah belief about Mahdawiat relies on this good news alone; we know that this is not so.

If we suppose every idea also discussed in the previous religions to have influenced Islam and to have been taken from those religions, it could cause us to reject many main points of Islam as confirmed by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. As a result, we could reject the ideas and beliefs that do not correspond to the Qur'an and accept only those which are in complete agreement with the Qur'an and Sunnah. However this is not right. The real standard is not that we should judge Islamic thoughts by comparing them with the previous religions and rejecting whatever was according to the previous religions; there are many things among the previous religions that have not been altered and they stem from the same original source as that of the Qur'an.

In addition to all this, the twelver Imam Shi'ahs' belief about the awaited Mahdi (‘a) relies on proven historical reality; Imam Mahdi (‘a) is the twelfth Imam (‘a) from the Household (‘a). The historians of the different Islamic sects have even recorded the story of his secret birth as Imam Hasan 'Askari's (‘a) son and the scholars of

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reason and proof that all these narrations have been issued by the sources of Inspiration who have all been connected to Allah the Exalted the High; for none but He knows the unseen and only those whom He wishes can predict the unseen. Based on this conscientious reason, the scholars and scientists rely on the authenticity of occultation as well as Imam Mahdi son of Imam Hasan 'Askari’s (as Imamate. The great people like Sheikh Saduq in **Ikmal al-Din** 1:91; Sheikh Tsui in **Ghaibah** pp. 101-107; Tabarsi in A'lam al-Wara, Ibn Tawoos in Kashf al-Mahjah etc.

various Islamic sects have accepted it, even if they do not believe it to be the same promised Mahdi (‘a). On the other hand, many Sunnite scholars believe that Imam Hasan 'Askari's (‘a) son is the Promised Mahdi (‘a).[1]

22. Conclusion

We have now reached the end of our discussion and can conclude as follows:

1. The theory of having faith in the arrival of a Universal Reformer towards the end of the world, who will then establish a just government that will bring real prosperity for mankind has its roots deep inside human nature. It originates from the human instinct of seeking perfection. This is why we can easily find how different human thoughts, even their material thoughts, have confirmed the certainty of the promised day to come. As for religious belief, it has come into being as a result of different good news recorded in the divine books of different religions. Therefore it is impossible for us to believe some Orientalists who consider this belief to be based upon superstition and myth.

2. Believing in the Promised Mahdi's (‘a) long life in occultation is particularly related to the Shi'ahs. It is this belief that separates the Shi'ahs from the Sunnites, both in human belief that having a long life is one of the most necessary things for the Universal Reformer (‘a) and religious belief that the Universal Reformer (‘a) will return after a long period of occultation. None of the two mentioned beliefs is

1. Sheikh Qunduzi Hanafi has named in his book **Yanabi’a al-Mawadah** many Sunnite scholars who believe that the Promised Mahdi (‘a) is none other than Imam Hasan 'Askari's (‘a) son and he is alive and in occultation. Also, Mirza Noori in his book **Kashf al-Astar** mentions forty Sunnite scholars and has also named their books in this regard. In his book **Al-Mahdi wa al-Mau'ood al-Muntadhir (‘a) ind al-Ulama Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Imamiah**, 'Allama Najmuddin 'Askari has also done the same thing. Likewise, Sayyid Thamir Umaydi in the first volume of his book **Dif'a 'an al-Kafi**, Sayyid Amin Amuli in the fifth volume of **Al-Majalis al-Siniah** and Ustad Dukhail in "Al-Imam al-Mahdi (‘a) have all compiled and discussed the Sunnite scholars' ideas and beliefs in this regard.

impossible for we have similar examples in the history of the Prophets (‘a) who have been in occultation for certain periods.

3. Although there is a consensus among all religions on the issue of having faith in the Universal Reformer and his occultation before his reappearance, this consensus has faced great disagreement when coming to determine the identity of this reformer. The disagreement is based on many factors. We can indicate some of many factors:

The good news recorded in the divine books about the Universal Reformer (‘a) have all spoken of a prediction of the unseen. Mankind always wishes to experience and see the hidden in tangible form. One of these factors is religious prejudice and the inclination to register their names saying that the Universal Reformer (‘a), who will play the greatest historical role, is from among them. This prejudice and inclination of the followers of each religion has made them explain the good news in the form of good news about a particular prophet or his administrator other than the Universal Saviour (‘a) they confuse alter the good news so that it can be applied to the Universal Saviour (‘a) with the characteristics of their own leaders and other religious symbols. Thus the disagreement is due to the wrong explanation of the divine predictions and their comparison; such disagreement does not originate from the text of the good news.

4. The only way to solve this matter is to distinguish between the good news issued about the Universal Saviour (‘a) and that issued regarding prophets (‘a) and their administrators. Then the picture drawn by this should be set forward and confirmed, without any kind of ready-made model. Then the picture of the good news should be compared with the historical facts and realities that can be proven; one should refrain from applying them to pre-made symbols, so that an identity of the real Universal Reformer (‘a) can be extracted from among them. As we said before, it is necessary that all candidates for a possible Universal Saviour (‘a), from whatever religion and sect they may be should be compared with this picture without any prejudice. The result will provide us with the best and real Universal Saviour (‘a) without any doubt surrounding him.

5. Based on this scientific method, we come to understand that all this heavenly good news leads us to the reality that the real Universal Saviour (‘a) is none other the twelfth Imam from the Household of

the Prophet (‘a). He is been compelled to remain hidden from the eyes of his enemies to avoid death. This leads us to Mahdi the Awaited (‘a) with his Shi'ah description. As one can easily observe, we are led to the Awaited Mahdi (‘a) by the qualities that cannot be applied to anyone else. They are the qualities that particularly relate to him and no one else throughout history has ever enjoyed these qualities.

6. To rely on this to prove right the Shi'ahs' belief about the Awaited Mahdi (‘a) is not the only reason and proof for the authentication of their belief. Rather, one can rely on all other reasons, too, such as the rational proofs, the Qur'anic logic and the reasons which are also proved by authentic hadiths and narrations. Also, one can rely on the saying that the previous religions and their texts have not been altered completely; it may be the teachings of the previous religions, which are confirmed by Islamic teaching too, or which have already been proved right as predictions of the unseen by the historical events following them; they speak of the unseen and no one but Allah knows about the unseen. The news about Imam Mahdi (‘a) is also one of these things. There is no harm in relying on this good news to prove the Imamite Shi'ahs' belief correct about Imam Mahdi (‘a) as the Universal Saviour (‘a).

7. Another point to be mentioned here is that the good news of the previous religions about proving the authenticity of the Household's (‘a) belief about the Promised Mahdi (‘a) and then adding this reason to the religious and rational reasons can emerge with several results. These could be: unveiling the importance of this belief and making the followers of other religions strengthen their faith in this belief; helping the followers of other religions and sects understand the identity of the Universal Reformer (‘a), the texts in their own holy books giving the good news about his arrival; calling the followers of other religions and sects to embrace Islam; arguing with them about the issue, bringing evidence from their own holy books, these discussion and arguments being the best of their kind. The result of this will be providing the religious reformers of different religions with single ground so that their efforts can be made more organized as well as stronger. This is possible only with faith in the Universal Reformer (‘a) and with his supervision of the efforts made by those trying to provide him necessary ground for a reappearance.

Hence the Islamic belief about the Promised Mahdi (‘a) provides one with more scope to deal with this issue in more detail.

'Allama Shahid Baqir al-Sadr says: “If the idea of Imam Mahdi (‘a) is older and wider than Islam, the detailed outlines which the latter has fixed for it have proved more satisfactory to all those ambitions that have been seeking its realization since the dawn of history as well as a more generous gift and a stronger prediction for the feelings of those who have been persecuted and oppressed in the course of history.” This is because Islam has turned the idea from the unseen into reality, and from an aspiration for a saviour the world would produce in the distant and unknown future into the conviction that he actually exists, looking forward with other people to that day and the right circumstances that would make it possible for him to assume his great role.

Thus, Imam Mahdi (‘a) is no longer an idea waiting to be materialized nor a prophecy that needs to be substantiated, but a living reality and a particular person, living among us in flesh and blood, who is sharing our hopes, suffering, sorrows and joys, actually witnessing all the sufferings, sadness and transgression that exist on the surface of the earth, who is affected with all this from near or far, who is waiting for the appropriate moment when he can stretch his hands to every oppressed and needy person and eradicate the tyrants.

However, it has been decreed that this expected leader is not to reveal anything concerning his life or person to other people, although he is living amongst them, waiting for the appointed moment. It is obvious that thinking in terms of these Islamic indications narrows the gap of the unseen between the oppressed people and the expected saviour and reduces the psychological distance between him and them, no matter how long the expectation may last.

So once we consider the idea of Imam Mahdi (‘a) as actually being a particular living person who is observing events as we are, it inspires us with the fact that the idea of the unconditional protest against all sorts of transgression and tyranny, which Imam Mahdi (‘a) stands for, has already materialized in the expected dissident leader who will emerge, paying no homage to the transgressors, as mentioned in the

hadith (tradition); by believing in him we are in reality believing in this unyielding and living protest and participating in it."[1]

1. **Bahth al-hawl al-Mahdi ('a)** pp. 12-14.

CHAPTER THREE
THE PROMISED MAHDI (AS) AND THE SIGNS OF HIS OCCULTATION IN THE HOLY QUR'AN

The most manifest characteristic of the thoughts of the followers of the Household (‘a) about the Promised Mahdi (‘a) which distinguish them from others is that they believe that Imam Mahdi (‘a) is alive and in occultation. Moreover they draw a clear identity of the Universal Reformer (‘a). They believe he is the last of the twelve Imams (‘a) from the Prophet's (‘a) holy progeny. He was born in 255 A.H. and is the son of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a). In 260 A.H. after the death of his holy father, he took the charge of Imamate, and has experienced two occultations. The first of the two occultations is known as the minor occultation and lasted till 329 A.H. During his period of first occultation, the Imam (‘a) was in connection with his Shi'ahs through his particular representatives; then he started the major occultation that is still continuing and will continue until the day Allah the Exalted the High allows him to reappear and take charge of his universal Islamic government, as a result of which justice will be widespread all over the world.

The Sunnites also agree that Imam Mahdi (‘a) is someone from the Household of the Prophet (s) and is from the offspring of Sayyidah Fatima (‘a). Some of them also believe in his birth, while another group still believes that he has yet to be born and will appear towards the end of the world to take the charge of his great responsibility. They do not have any reason or proof to rely on to back up their opinion other than the narrated and rational hadith speaking of his appearance towards the end of the world; this reason and proof is not necessary to prove that he will be born towards the end of the world. It cannot negate his occultation, because, according to Shi'ah belief, appearance and occultation cannot occur at the same time. So it is therefore impossible to say that the proof of appearance towards the end of the world will negate his occultation and thus there is no

contradiction between this occultation and his appearance because it is logically impossible.

The Household (‘a) school of thought has set forth very detailed reasons in their doctrinal books to prove the occultation of Imam Mahdi (‘a).[1]

We observed in the previous discussion that the heavenly good news about the promised Universal Saviour (‘a) who will appear towards the end of the world cannot be completely applied to any other than Imam Mahdi (‘a), son of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) according to what the Shi'ahs believe about him. Moreover, this has also clearly indicated and enforced his occultation, and is one of the most important points confirming the Imamite Shi'ah belief. This good news also indicates that the Universal Saviour (‘a) is the last of the twelve leaders. There are other characteristics, too, in this good news that can only be applied to him. This is what has made the Imamite Shi'ah belief and understanding regarding Mahdi (‘a) the Awaited an excellent means of appeasing the disagreement about his real identity. For this, it is necessary to rely on scientific research and analysis.

We will now present some verses from the Holy Book, according to which there is always a divine leader (Imam) who guides the people towards the path of Allah the Almighty, observes and supervises their actions and who is a certain proof of Allah the Exalted the High both in this world and in the world hereafter. These holy verses mention some qualities and characteristics which can only apply to Imam Mahdi (‘a). Therefore, these verses of the also indicate that only the Imamite Shi'ah belief about Imam Mahdi (‘a) the Awaited is authentically correct. These are the verses that prove that Allah's land will never remain without a divine leader. Thus these verses apply to Imam Mahdi (‘a) the Awaited so easily and clearly that no further explanation is required. However, the political disagreements always

1. Such as Sheikh Mufid's Rasail about occultation, which consists of five volumes. Al-Fusul al-'Asharah fi al-Ghaibah and Al-Maqna'ah fi al-Ghaibah authored by Sayyid Murtadha and Sheikh Tsui's “Ghaibah” and Sheikh Saduq's Ikmal al-Din and Sheikh Nu'amani's “Ghaibah” along with other books written on the topic of Imamate, such as Shafi and its summarization with so many other books that contain a great amount of reasoning and they are all written on this issue.

experienced in the history of Islam with its reflection in doctrinal formation of different beliefs hide these obvious facts or interpret them in such an ambiguous manner that their manifest meanings are forgotten.

We will now end this discussion with research on those hadiths of the Prophet of Allah (s) that are recorded without alteration in the nine authentic books of the Sunnites along with other authentic books of all the Muslims and which confirm our belief. These narrations are excellent proofs for the followers of each sect. Moreover, these narrations are good supporting evidence and complete the verses of the Holy Qur'an which we will mention shortly. These narrations also provide us with an external model of the person whose qualities are mentioned in the holy verses in general. They prove that the Promised Mahdi (‘a), whose arrival has been predicted by the Prophet of Allah (s), is the twelfth Imam from his Household (‘a) and none other than Imam Hasan 'Askari's (‘a) son.

1. The land will never remain without an Imam

Allah the Exalted the High has said in the Holy Book:

﴿يَوْمَ نَدْعُواْ كُلَّ أُنَاسٍۭ بِإِمَـٰمِهِمْ ۖ فَمَنْ أُوتِىَ كِتَـٰبَهُۥ بِيَمِينِهِۦ فَأُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ يَقْرَءُونَ كِتَـٰبَهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَمَن كَانَ فِى هَـٰذِهِۦٓ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِى ٱلْـَٔاخِرَةِ أَعْمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا﴾

"On the day when We shall summon all men with their record, whoso is given his book in his right hand - such will read their book and they will not be wronged a shred. Whoso is blind here will be blind in the Hereafter, and yet further from the road."[1]

This explicit text clearly explains that for every era there is a leader and the people of that era will be raised on the Day of Judgment with the name of the same leader, and they will be dealt on that day by their leader. The leader will be supervising their actions on Judgment

1. *Surat Isra, 17:71-72.*

Day, which is also another proof of their argument. The question which can be asked here is what this holy verse means by the word "Imam."

Before we answer this question, we first need to refer to the Qur'anic meaning of the word so that we come to understand all its possible meanings and then find the meaning which can be applied here.

In the Holy Qur'an, the word "Imam" (leader) is used for someone who is followed by others. This word has been used in the Qur'an only in two ways. The two meanings are: an Imam (leader) who has been appointed by Allah the Exalted the High to lead and guide the people by Allah's will. This is what we can also see in the following holy verses:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَـٰهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا﴾

"And We made them chiefs who guide by Our command".[1]

﴿إِنِّى جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا﴾

"He said: Lo! I have appointed thee a leader for mankind".[2]

﴿وَنُرِيدُ أَن نَّمُنَّ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ ٱسْتُضْعِفُوا۟ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ ٱلْوَٰرِثِينَ﴾

"And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them examples and to make them the inheritors".[3]

1. *Surat al-Anbiya, 21:73.*
2. *Surat Baqarah, 2:124.*
3. *Surat Qasas, 28:5.*

﴿وَٱجۡعَلۡنَا لِلۡمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا﴾

And who say: and make us leaders for (all) those who ward off (evil)."[1]

Hence, in all these above cases, one can easily see that an Imam (leader) is always appointed only by Allah the High and no one else.

However, the second usage of the word "Imam" in the Holy Qur'an is for those who mislead people. For example, in the following holy verse:

﴿فَقَٰتِلُوٓاْ أَئِمَّةَ ٱلۡكُفۡرِ إِنَّهُمۡ لَآ أَيۡمَٰنَ لَهُمۡ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَنتَهُونَ﴾

"Then fight the heads of disbelief - Lo! They have no binding oaths - in order that they may desist".[2]

Or the holy verse:

﴿وَجَعَلۡنَٰهُمۡ أَئِمَّةٗ يَدۡعُونَ إِلَى ٱلنَّارِۖ وَيَوۡمَ ٱلۡقِيَٰمَةِ لَا يُنصَرُونَ﴾

"And we made them patterns that invite unto the Fire, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not be helped".[3][4]

So in the above holy verses, "Imam" has been used in its second meaning.

These two meanings of the word apply to people and the word appears in singular and plural form. However, when used for non-living things, it is used in two ways and only in singular form. When

1. *Surat Furqan, 25:74.*
2. *Surat Tawbah, 9:12.*
3. *Surat Qasas, 28:41.*
4. Certainly the word "ja'al Allah" does not mean that, as in the above-mentioned other holy verses, Allah has appointed them to mislead the people as He has appointed leaders to lead the people; but as recorded in 'Allama Tabataba'i's **Al-Mizan**: "the meaning of making them leaders to call the people towards fire is that Allah has made them lead in the field of blasphemy and, as a result, others also followed them and were connected to them." **Al-Mizan** 16:54.

used for non-living things, the meaning of "Imam" is "Torah." We recite in the Holy Qur'an:

﴿وَمِن قَبْلِهِۦ كِتَٰبُ مُوسَىٰٓ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً﴾[1]

Is he (to be counted equal with them) who relied on a clear proof from his Lord, and a witness from Him recite it, and before it was the Book of Moses, an example and a mercy? Such believe therein, and whoso disbelieve therein of the clans, the Fire is his appointed place. So be not thou in doubt concerning it. Lo! It is the Truth from thy Lord; but most of mankind believe not.

Maybe from this usage, we come to know that the word "Imam" can also be used for all divine books, or at least for the major ones. However, the second usage of the word for non-living things is in the meaning of "the divine memory" as in the following verse:

﴿وَكُلَّ شَىْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَٰهُ فِىٓ إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾

"And all things We have kept in a clear Register".[2]

To whom does the word "Imam" refer to in the holy verse?

We have to see the word "imam" in the first holy verse:

﴿يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا۟ كُلَّ أُنَاسٍۭ بِإِمَٰمِهِمْ ۖ فَمَنْ أُوتِىَ كِتَٰبَهُۥ بِيَمِينِهِۦ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ يَقْرَءُونَ كِتَٰبَهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَمَن كَانَ فِى هَٰذِهِۦٓ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِى ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ أَعْمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا﴾

"On the day when We shall summon all men with their record, whoso is given his book in his right hand - such will read their book and they

1. *Surat Hud, 11:17.*
2. *Surat Yasin, 36:12.*

will not be wronged a shred. Who so is blind here will be blind in the Hereafter, and yet further from the road".[1]

Which says that no era will remain free of him and his people and an era will be named on his name on the Day of Judgment. Is he a certain person? Or does this word mean a particular book of every era and time? Or does it mean "the divine memory?"

We cannot accept that the word "Imam" used in this holy verse means the heavenly books or the divine memory; this is a general verse and indicates its content, namely that no era will remain without an Imam (leader), from the first human being to the last one. According to the Qur'an as well as the history of mankind the first divine book was that of Noah. So if the word "Imam" used in this holy verse means one of the divine books for every time and era, we have to neglect the time before Noah ('a) time, which contradicts the generality of the verse; the verse is clearly using the word for "all mankind", which includes all the people of all ages.

Also the word "Imam" in this verse cannot be taken to mean "the divine memory" because there is only one "divine memory" and is not related to a particular age and period, while the holy verse explains that for all people there is one particular "Imam."

In this manner, only one of the above-mentioned two meanings remain, i.e. the word "Imam" has been used for someone to whom the people are attracted and who they follow and let him lead them along the right path, or who misleads them. Otherwise the word "Imam" used here is only used for a just and righteous Imam (leader) and that is someone whom Allah chooses in every era to lead the people of his time with Allah's will. He is the proof of Allah among his people and his people will be called by his name on the Day of Judgment so that he will deal with his people. Such an Imam can be a Prophet ('a) such as Abraham ('a), or the Prophet Muhammad (s), or he can be their administrators ('a).

The word "calling" used in the holy verse also means to bring the people together; i.e. every group of people in every era will be raised with the Imam of their time. Then those who have followed their

1. *Surat Isra, 17:71-72.*

Imam will be on the path of righteousness. In this way, the misguided nature of those who have been prevented from following their Imam and have been unable to understand who their real Imam is will be manifest and publicly known.

As mentioned in the interpretation of the two verses by 'Allama Tabatabai, this meaning is what we can deduct from considering the two holy verses mentioned above. While interpreting the two verses, he has recorded the words of all other interpreters about the meaning of the word "Imam" used here. Then he has clearly shown that they are not conforming to the Qur'anic usage of the word and the apparent usage of the two verses. In this way, 'Allama has proved that their words are absolutely wrong and unreliable. Maybe the most important of all sayings is that through the "Imam" of every nation, Allah the Exalted the High wants to indicate the prophet of every nation, just as we can say that the nations of Abraham (‘a), Muses (‘a), Jesus (‘a) and Muhammad (s) will all be raised with their own prophets (‘a).

However, this opinion does not conform with these verses, because they do not include the nations for which there were no available prophets and it is contradictory to what the holy verse is conveying. This opinion is also rejected when it is compared with other holy verses, which, God willing, we will mention in the forthcoming text.

Imam; a means to freedom from a state of being misled

Based on what is mentioned in the above lines, we can conclude these two holy verses indicate the presence of a true leader, who, in every era, helps the people free themselves from ignorance and from being misled, and who leads them towards the right path. He is Allah's proof for his people, both in this world and in the world hereafter; and understanding and recognizing him will deliver his followers both in this world and in the next. On the other hand, if they fail to recognize him, his followers will remain ignorant in this world and will face severe punishment in the hereafter. The Day of Judgment is the day when people of each era will be raised with their own real Imam (‘a) and those deviating from him and those who have not followed will be addressed thus: "He was your leader who was present among you. Why did you not recognize him?" In this way, Allah's ultimatum for them is proved and the wisdom behind raising them with their Imam (‘a) becomes clear.

As for the important question about the content of these two holy verses, we can say it is: “Who is the true Imam and Allah's proof for us in our time; because according to these two verses, in every era and time, there must be a clear model of the true Imam among the people.”

To find an answer for this question from the Qur'an, which is certainly a divine proof for all the Muslims, we first need to extract the qualities of the true Imam from the holy verses of the Qur'an, and then search for someone in our own era with these qualities.

Imam Mahdi's (‘a) qualities mentioned in the Qur'an

In the light of the interpretation of the above verses, what we understand is that the Imam and leader we seek must have some particular qualities which make him able to rise up and deal with his people's affairs, such as the ability to guide the people. If they follow him, people can achieve prosperity and guidance and following him should be equal to following Allah the Exalted the High. Moreover, he should not only be able to deal with the people's outward affairs, but should also be able to understand their internal affairs and intentions. In other words, he should guide as well as supervise the actions of his nation. This quality requires that the Imam should be able to lead his nation by Allah the Exalted the High, Himself. He should be qualified to do this so that Allah the Exalted the High can give him the knowledge of the Book and the means to understand the reality of people's actions so that he will bear witness against them and deal with them on the Day of Judgment. In the following text we will discuss this issue in detail.

Also, it is necessary for an Imam to enjoy the highest possible level of justice and piety, so that there is not the slightest possibility of misleading people when guiding them towards the right path so that cruelty and oppression is not shown towards them when witnessing their actions on the Day of Judgment. In other words, an Imam should enjoy a great deal of innocence. The Holy Qur'an is clearly saying:

﴿وَإِذِ ٱبۡتَلَىٰٓ إِبۡرَٰهِـۧمَ رَبُّهُۥ بِكَلِمَٰتٖ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامٗاۖ قَالَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِيۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهۡدِي ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ﴾

"And (remember) when his Lord tried Abraham with (His) commands, and he fulfilled them, He said: Lo! I have appointed thee a leader for mankind. (Abraham) said: And of my offspring (will there be leaders)? He said: My covenant include not wrong-doers".[1]

As a result, the Imamate (divine leadership) is a divine promise blessed by Allah the Exalted the High which will never be given to someone having committed the slightest cruelty and oppression. Certainly, committing sin is also a kind of cruelty. Therefore, it is obligatory for an Imam to be pure.

We can observe in this holy verse that when Allah the Exalted the High accepts prophet Ibrahim's (‘a) request to keep the Imamate in his progeny and offspring, He accepts this only on the condition of infallibility. What we understand from this is that there must be some people amongst the offspring of prophet Ibrahim (‘a) who have the ability to become an Imam. Another holy verse in the Qur'an saying also confirms this.":

﴿وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةَۢ بَاقِيَةٗ فِي عَقِبِهِۦ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَرۡجِعُونَ﴾[2]

"And he made it a word enduring among his seed, that haply they might return.[3]

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1. *Surat Baqarah, 2:124.*
2. *Surat Zakhraf, 43:28.*
3. Also refer to:

﴿وَوَهَبۡنَا لَهُۥٓ إِسۡحَٰقَ وَيَعۡقُوبَ وَجَعَلۡنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ ٱلنُّبُوَّةَ وَٱلۡكِتَٰبَ﴾

"And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob, and We established the prophethood and the Scripture among his seed, and We gave him his reward in the world, and lo! In the Hereafter he verily is among the righteous".
Surat 'Ankaboot, 29:27.

Since the Imamate is a divine post, it is necessary for an Imam to be appointed by Allah the Exalted the High, and Allah knows best who should be blessed with His mission. This belief is also supported and confirmed by verses of the Holy Qur'an, because in the Holy Qur'an, it is stated that the Imamate comes from Allah the Exalted the High. As we mentioned in the holy verses of Zakhraf and Baqarah, this task has not been related to anyone other than Allah the High. Allah's choosing a person for the post of Imamate can be proved in several ways, such as the explicit text generated from the Revelation – like the Qur'an and Sunnah, by the explanation of someone whose Imamate and infallibility has already been confirmed or who has already shown some miracles or other extraordinary tasks so that his claim to be an Imam is proved.

As a result, we can say that the Imam of our time, whose presence is confirmed by the holy verses of Surat Isra, should be someone leading his nation and observing and supervising their actions so that he can deal with his nation on the Day of Judgment. Also, he must be infallible; or, at least, he should possess a great deal of justice so that he will have the ability to lead people and witness their deeds and actions. He should, also, be someone from prophet Ibrahim's (‘a) offspring, for we are now sure that the post of Imamate will continue in his offspring. He should be confirmed by the Holy Prophet (s) or by someone after him whose Imamate is already confirmed; or he should have performed miracles and other extraordinary tasks so that his connection with heaven and his claiming to be an Imam is proved.

Model of the Imam in our time

We need to observe who qualifies for these qualities and characteristics in our time. It is crystal clear as that no person with such qualities can be found in our time, nor can anyone claim to possess these qualities in our society. So does the absence of a person with these qualities indicate that there is no Imam for our time?

Certainly not; because saying so is in contradiction with the verses of Surat Isra. In this way, we are left with a single belief that we should accept that an Imam with such qualities does exist in our time, though in occultation. We should accept that he is dealing with the affairs of his people to the extent that he can fight their case on the Day of

Judgment; because this is one of the most important elements of an Imam, even when in occultation.

This is what the Shi'ahs of the Household (‘a) believe regarding the Awaited Mahdi (‘a).

The Household (‘a) school of thought has set forth both rational and traditional reasoning to prove its opinion regarding this issue. With other necessary conditions provided, such as infallibility, the Prophet's (s) confirmation and confirmation by the Imams (‘a) whose Imamate have already been confirmed and who are the forefathers of Imam Mahdi (‘a), all indicate him being an Imam (‘a); in addition, many miracles have been performed by Imam Mahdi (‘a) both in his minor and major occultations. Moreover, he is dealing with his responsibilities of Imamate to the best possible extent so that he can deal with his nation's affairs on the Day of Judgment. All these points have been recorded in the Shi'ah books on this topic.[1]

It suffices to mention here that some of these books have been compiled many years before Imam Mahdi's (‘a) birth, in fact almost a century before. In these books, there are many narrations that indicate the Imamate of Imam Mahdi (‘a), his occultation and its length. This is one of the strongest reasons that these books and the narrations recorded in them are correct and authentic; scholars have also relied on this, because the occultation of Imam Mahdi (‘a) is one of the best ways to prove and confirm these narrations which have spoken of occultation even before it happened. This is how we come to know that all these narrations issue from sources of divine inspiration.[2]

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1. For this purpose, we can refer to books such as: “Muntakhab al-Athar fi al-Imam al-Thani 'Ashar” of Ayatullah Sheikh Lutfullah Safi, who, in his book has compiled a great number of narrations with the Sunnite and Shi'ah chain of transmittance. Also, Sheikh Hurr Amali's **ithbat al-hidaiah fi nusos wa al-mu'jizat**, Hamwini Shafi'i's **Faraid al-Simtain** and Hafiz Qundozi Hanafi's **Yanabi' al-Mawaddah** along with many other books.
2. For more information, one can refer to **the preface of Sheikh Saduq's Kamal al-Din** p. 12; Sheikh Mufid, **Fusul al-'Ashara** Ch. 5; the fifth volume of Al-Ghaibah; Sheikh Tsui's **Ghaibah** p. 101 onwards; Sheikh Tabarsi's **A'lam al-Wara** 2:257 onwards; Sayyid Ibn Tawus, **Kashf al-Mahjah** p. 104 and other demonstrational books.

2. For every era there is an Imam supervising the actions of his nation

Allah the Exalted the High says in the Holy Book:

﴿فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَىٰ هَـٰؤُلَآءِ شَهِيدًا﴾

"But how (will it be with them) when We bring of every people a witness, and We bring thee (O Muhammad) a witness against these?"[1]

He said:

﴿وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا ثُمَّ لَا يُؤْذَنُ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ﴾

"And (bethink you of) the day when we raise up of every nation a witness, then there is no leave for disbelievers, nor are they allowed to make amends".[2]

In another verse of the Holy Qur'an, we recite:

﴿وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِى كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِم مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَىٰ هَـٰؤُلَآءِ﴾

"And (bethink you of) the day when We raise in every nation a witness against them of their own folk, and We bring thee (Muhammad) as a witness against these".[3]

Allah the High says in the Holy Book:

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1. *Surat Nisa, 4:41.*
2. *Surat Nahl, 16:84.*
3. *Surat Nahl, 16:89.*

﴿وَنَزَعۡنَا مِن كُلِّ أُمَّةٖ شَهِيدٗا فَقُلۡنَا هَاتُواْ بُرۡهَٰنَكُمۡ فَعَلِمُوٓاْ أَنَّ ٱلۡحَقَّ لِلَّهِ وَضَلَّ عَنۡهُم مَّا كَانُواْ يَفۡتَرُونَ﴾[1]

And on the Day when He shall call unto them and say: Where are My partners whom ye pretended?

As mentioned in the previous two verses of Surat Isra, these holy verses speak of Allah's questioning of mankind on the Day of Judgment. These verses also confirm the two holy verses of Surat Isra confirming the absolute presence of an Imam for every era, whose people will be questioned by Allah on the Day of Judgment regarding their path, misguidance and actions compared to Allah's religion. Allah will question both him and his nation on the Day of Judgment.

Certainly to be a divine proof for the people, it is necessary that the Imam (‘a) should himself be fully aware of the divine religion so that he will be able to call people to it and so that he can take charge to lead them in this regard. Moreover, he should be well aware of what the people of his nation are doing so that he can witness as well as supervise their actions i.e. so that he can witness and express his agreement or disagreement with the people's actions on the Day of Judgment.

Certainly the witnessing of which these verses speak is absolute. “What we understand from all interpreters' statements is that the Imam's (‘a) witnessing is absolute, which consists of bearing witness of the nations' actions and even about the manner of the Prophets (‘a) propagation of Allah's religion.”[2] Zamakhshiri, too, has explained about this issue in “Tafsir Kashaf”, saying: “This is why the prophets of all nations not only witness the actions of their nations, but also their own propagation.”[3] Also, explaining the meaning of Shahid, he says: “He is someone who will witness both in the people's favour

1. *Surat Qasas, 28:75*.
2. **Tafsir al-Mizan** 1:32.
3. **Tafsir Kashaf** 3:429.

and against them; he witnesses their faith and confirmation as well as about infidelity and denial."[1]

Another point we need to explain here is that someone who has to bear witness about people's actions and deeds must be living and not dead and he should have spent time with them as their contemporary. This is what we see Allah the Exalted the High speaking through the voice of Jesus Christ (‘a), which also indicates what we just said:

﴿وَكُنتُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ شَهِيدٗا مَّا دُمۡتُ فِيهِمۡۖ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيۡتَنِي كُنتَ أَنتَ ٱلرَّقِيبَ عَلَيۡهِمۡۚ وَأَنتَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيۡءٖ شَهِيدٞ﴾[2]

I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when Thou took me Thou wast the Watcher over them. Thou art Witness over all things.

What we understand from this holy verse is that though the result (of witnessing the people's actions) will be announced on the Day of Judgment, the ability to witness people's deeds and their behaviour in this world is achieved only when the person is their contemporary; because there is a phrase in the holy verse saying: "When I was among them, and then You took my soul…" Hence, it is necessary that a witness, with the help of whom Allah the Exalted the High will question his nation on the Day of Judgment, must be a contemporary of the people, who will be questioned by Allah the High. Therefore, we cannot repeat Zamakhshiri's mistake, who limited these witnesses to the prophets (‘a)[3]; rather we should believe that in every era there is a particular witness for his nation. Fakher Razi explains this issue in his interpretation when he says that Allah the Exalted the High says: "And we bring a witness from among every nation" means that we appoint someone to witness their actions and deed. To some people these witnesses are the prophets (‘a) who will witness that they had spread Allah's verses among people and tried their best to explain them to their nations. In this manner, it will be clear that the

1. **Tafsir Kashaf** 2:262.
2. *Surat Maidah, 5:117.*
3. **Tafsir Kashaf** 3:429.

people themselves have been careless about Allah's signs and this will increase their sadness and grief.

Other people believe: "These people who bear witness are those who only witness the deeds of their own people, and the Prophets ('a) are also included in them. This belief explains the holy verse in a better manner; because in this holy verse, Allah the Exalted the High has included all nations and people and will raise a witness from among them. This holy verse also includes the periods of time when there were no Prophets ('a) for the people to guide them - such a period is called an "interval" - and the periods of time after the death of the Prophet of Allah (s). In this way, when raising some witnesses from among the people, they will certainly come to understand that the Prophet Muhammad (s) was truthful."[1]

We must accept the fact that our era must also have a witness who can witness the actions and deeds of ourselves as his nation, as it has been in every era. This belief is supported by the word "these," used in the two verses of Surat Nisa and Surat Hajj. When speaking of Prophet Muhammad's (s) witnessing his nation's deeds, Allah the Exalted the High says: "We made you a witness of their actions." The word used in this holy verse is indicating the Prophet's (s) contemporaries, for there will be other witnesses for the nations after him.[2] So who is the witness of our time and who will witness our actions? To extract the qualities of this witness and to answer this question, we will once again refer to the Qur'an.

The qualities of the witnessing Imam

The Qura'nic verse (no. 89) from Chapter 13, states explicitly that he is one of the human beings. The verse states:

﴿فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِم مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ﴾[3]

Explains that he is someone from among mankind ("We will raise a witness for them from among them"). This is what we also

1. **Tafsir Kabir** 25:12-13; Refer to: Majm'a al-Baian, under the same holy verse.
2. **Tafsir Kabir** 25:12-13; **Tafsir Kashaf** 2:628.
3. *Surat Nahl, 16:89.*

understand from some other holy verses of the Qur'an, like the word "*min*" (from) used in "*fi kulli ummah*" (someone from among the nation).

Hence, those appointed for witnessing people's actions are also human beings and not angels, jinn, the heavenly books or the divine memory. This also confirms our discussion about the explanation and interpretation of some verses of Surat Isra, when we say that in those verses the word "Imam" has been used for a particular person and not a divine book, because the verses of Surat Isra speak of Allah's questioning the nations by their Imam and leader, and he is the same person that has been used as a "witnessing person" in these holy verses. Thus, in both cases, the result is the same and the Imam is someone who will witness the actions of his nation.

The holy verses of the Qur'an, too, have always used a singular noun when speaking of the qualities of the witnessing person. In other words, he who will witness the actions of his nation will always be alone in his time. This completely conforms to its singular usage about the Imam in Surat Isra. The singular usage is to reject the beliefs of those who interpret the holy verses saying that the entire nation and all believers promoting good and preventing from evil will together witness the actions of their nation or other nations, living with them in the same period of time. Moreover, such usage also negates the belief that these verses are speaking about great spiritual people and the world does not remain free from them in any era. Although, according to the narrations produced by other parties, their presence has been approved and confirmed,[1] still only one person witnesses the people's affairs in every era.

As we mentioned, according to Zamakhshiri, witnessing the people's infidelity and denial or their faith and confirmation is one of the responsibilities of the witnessing person; we know that both of these affairs are related to hearts, so the people's common sense and other material means cannot understand such affairs, for the senses can only feel the apparent phase of actions and not their hidden aspects i.e. these senses can only understand whatever exists in front of them.

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1. Refer to: **Mu'jam al-Ahadith al-Imam al-Mahdi** 1:274; taken from Musnad Ahmad and other Sunnite narration reference books.

Hence, these senses cannot understand the unseen. On the other hand, the sensual and hidden actions such as infidelity and faith, deliverance or loss are completely out of reach of the senses and they are hidden inside human beings. The Day of Judgment when mankind will be questioned by Allah the Exalted and the day when mankind's hidden actions will be unveiled also depend on these hidden affairs. Allah the Almighty, Himself, has also said:

﴿وَلَـٰكِن يُؤَاخِذُكُم بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ﴾

"But He will take you to task for that which your hearts have garnered".[1]

We can now conclude that bearing witness of such affairs and having complete command and supervision over them even regarding present human beings, cannot possibly be done by common people. So how can one witness those who are not present? Certainly it is impossible for ordinary people to do so. This can only be done by one who has taken this charge from Allah the Exalted the High and whom Allah the High has enabled to explore the hidden aspects of the actions of the human race.[2]

Therefore, it is necessary for the witnessing person to have divine knowledge of the realities of the actions of his nation; according to the divine scale, it is the people's inner actions and intentions that have real value and not their apparent actions. Hence, it is hard to believe that a person witnessing the actions of his nation is a common person like all other common people. Rather, he should be someone directly enjoying divine blessings. In other words, they are the chosen persons from among all human beings and they are selected by Allah the Exalted Himself; and Allah the Exalted the High has made them benefit from His knowledge of the unseen. One of the main things regarding divine knowledge is to recognize the hidden aspects of human actions.

Certainly not all humans will be able to enjoy this blessing, for it is particularly for his purified leaders. However, those who are lower in

1. *Surat Baqarah, 2:225.*
2. **Tafsir al-Mizan** 1:320-321.

their rank as compared to these people, in other words, who have a mediocre blessing of prosperity and a mediocre level of guidance, justice and faith, will never achieve such a level. The least quality that the witnessing persons should have is that they should directly be under the guidance and blessings of Allah the Exalted the High and should be the people of the right path.[1]

The knowledge of the Book is with that individual who is bearing witness

Certainly it is impossible to witness the people's hidden affairs and actions with the commonly available and natural tools; rather it needs a particular and special kind of knowledge, which Allah the High blesses upon whoever from among His servants he wishes; because Allah the High knows well on whom He should bestow His knowledge.[2] This is how the witness enjoys a great deal of knowledge which is higher than the level of the common people's knowledge. It is when he observes the causes and effects clearly and carries his responsibility, which is possible only by unnatural means and through knowledge of the unseen. Now he possesses existential guardianship and finds the natural and unseen causes and effects, this certainly being by the will of Allah. This special kind of knowledge and understanding is known as the "the knowledge of the Book."

We can observe the same thing in the story of Asif bin Barkhia, when he brought Bilqis' throne from Yemen to Palestine within a second. The Holy Book considers Asif bin Barkhia's action within such a small interval of time as having a little "knowledge of the Book"; this is an action which can never be done on the basis of natural means. Consider this holy verse:

1. **Tafsir al-Mizan** 1:220-221.
2. This sentence indicates Allah the Almighty's saying in *Surat An'am, 4:124.*

﴿قَالَ ٱلَّذِى عِندَهُۥ عِلۡمٌ مِّنَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ أَنَا۠ ءَاتِيكَ بِهِۦ قَبۡلَ أَن يَرۡتَدَّ إِلَيۡكَ طَرۡفُكَۚ فَلَمَّا رَءَاهُ مُسۡتَقِرًّا عِندَهُۥ قَالَ هَٰذَا مِن فَضۡلِ رَبِّى﴾

"One with whom was knowledge of the Scripture said: I will bring it thee before thy gaze returneth unto thee. And when he saw it set in his presence, (Solomon) said: This is of the bounty of my Lord".[1]

Asif bin Barkhia was the administrator of prophet Sulayman (‘a). With this action completed, prophet Sulayman (‘a) wanted the people to know that, after him, Asif bin Barkhia would be Allah's proof among them; this is why he asked Asif to perform such an action to show that he enjoyed the knowledge of the Book to some extent[2]. Asif Barkhia only had a little knowledge of the Book. This is what we understand from the word “*min*” (from) used in the holy verse, which is used for separating some from the whole.

What we understand from this holy verse is that whoever has the whole knowledge of the Book will enjoy a rank much higher than the existential guardianship and such a person will have the power to understand the hidden aspects of people's actions and can witness the reality of the divine mission in the best possible manner.

On the basis of what we mentioned in the above lines, whoever is the witness to the actions of his nation must have the knowledge of the Book to some extent. In other words, we can say that whoever has a little knowledge of the Book is able to deal with such an action. In the last verse of Surat R'ad, Allah the Exalted says:

1. *Surat Naml, 27:40.*
2. Sayyid Jazairi, **Qasas Al-Anbiya** p. 428; taken from Tafsir 'Ayashi.

﴿وَيَقُولُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَسۡتَ مُرۡسَلٗاۚ قُلۡ كَفَىٰ بِٱللَّهِ شَهِيدَۢا بَيۡنِي وَبَيۡنَكُمۡ وَمَنۡ عِندَهُۥ عِلۡمُ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ﴾

"They who disbelieve say: Thou art no messenger (of Allah). Say: Allah, and whosoever hath knowledge of the Scripture, is sufficient witness between me and you".[1]

From the Sunnite chain of narrators, as mentioned in 'Shawahid al-Tanzil' by Hakim Haskani,[2] as well as by Shi'ahs, it has been proved that the above-mentioned holy verse was revealed in Imam Ali's ('a) praise. This proves that knowledge of the Book is with Imam Ali ('a) and other Imams and Leaders ('a) from his progeny. In history, no one other than an Imam has ever claimed such a thing. Moreover, the conduct, behaviour and lifestyle of these great leaders, as well as a great number of narrations, recorded and reported by Sunnites as well as Shi'ahs, also confirm this claim.

In the light of the above-mentioned above holy verses, we can conclude the following:

1. There is certainly someone in each era who is appointed by Allah the Exalted the High as a witnessing person for the actions of his nation and through whom Allah will question his nation on the Day of Judgment. Thus he is the Imam of the era of his nation and his nation will be raised on the Day of Judgment in his name.

2. Sometimes this witnessing Imam is a prophet ('a) and on some occasions, when there is no prophet, he is chosen from among his administrators, as in our era and the periods after the death of Prophet Muhammad (s), the last Prophet. It is because the above-mentioned verses are absolute and include all eras and periods; this is what the apparent aspect of the verse confirms, too. Therefore, we have also a witnessing Imam of our time.

1. *Surat R'ad, 13:43.*
2. **Shawahid al-Tanzil** 1:400 onwards

3. The witnessing Imam of our time must be alive. The reason behind this statement becomes clear from the holy verse of the Qur'an speaking through the voice of Jesus (‘a).

4. The witnessing Imam must be blessed by Allah and he must be someone whom Allah the Exalted the High has blessed with existential guardianship, so that benefiting from his divine power, he can understand the reality of the actions of his nation, because he will have to bear witness in their favour or against them on the Day of Judgment. The requirement and proof of this divine blessing is that he must have knowledge of the Book completely or to some extent.

5. Since we do not know anyone in our times with these qualities, we are compelled to accept that he is hidden from our eyes. In other words, we must accept and believe that such a person does exist, but is hidden from our eyes and we cannot see him; while living in occultation, he performs and carries out his responsibilities that fit his post and enable Allah the Exalted the High to question our actions on the Day of Judgment through him.

6. By Sunnite and Shi'ah means, it has been confirmed and is now clear that Imam Ali (‘a) and other leaders from his progeny had the knowledge of the Book - as explained by the Qur'an; no one else other than them enjoyed this blessing.

The great interpreter and scholar 'Allama Muhammad Hussain Tabatabai proved in his book “Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an” that the last holy verse cannot be compared to the last verse of Surat R'ad because the qualities and characteristics presented are only applicable to the great Imams (‘a) and no one else, and since only they have ever claimed such a thing, it is automatically related to them alone. Their (the Imams' (‘a)) opinion about their twelfth one known as Muhammad bin Hasan 'Askari (‘a), their belief about his occultation and his rising to bear his responsibilities of Imamate and for performing the responsibility of witnessing the actions of the people of his time completely match what the above-mentioned holy verse says; we have already proved that it applies to no other than him by discussing the beliefs of other sects and religions in this regard.

This group of holy verses indicate the certainty of the presence of Imam Mahdi (‘a), his living in occultation and his rise to carrying his

responsibility of witnessing the people's actions so that Allah the Exalted the High can question them for their actions through him. This is what other holy verses also confirm. In the forthcoming lines we will also discuss those verses.

No period is without the guide leading the people towards Him with His permission

Allah the Exalted the High has said:

﴿وَيَقُولُ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَوۡلَآ أُنزِلَ عَلَيۡهِ ءَايَةٞ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦٓۗ إِنَّمَآ أَنتَ مُنذِرٞ وَلِكُلِّ قَوۡمٍ هَادٖ﴾

"Those who disbelieve say: If only some portent were sent down upon him from his Lord! Thou art a warner only, and for every folk a guide".[1]

This holy verse indicates that for every nation there is a leader and guide. Relying on this holy verse, what we understand is that in every era there must be someone calling the people towards the truth and reality.

This reality, along with the holy verses of the Qur'an, the authentic narrations and other rational reasoning related to Allah the Exalted the High's Godliness, requires that Allah the High appoints someone as His proof for His servants in every era so that he can lead them to the right path; Allah always guides His creations towards the target of their existence, as He has said:

﴿ٱلَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ ۝٢ وَٱلَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَىٰ﴾

"Who create, then dispose. Who measure, then guide".[2] [3]

1. *Surat R'ad, 13:90.*
2. Refer to: interpretation of these two holy verses in the twentieth volume of Tafsir al-Mizan.
3. *Surat A'ala, 87:2-3.*

This tradition has always been as it is among the people of all ages. Allah the Exalted has created human beings and wants to guide them towards perfection and towards what will bring them the prosperity of this world as well as the world hereafter.

This being the case, the above-mentioned holy verses can be interpreted thus: "The infidels and unbelievers spoke to the Prophet of Allah (s) and asked him for miracles, while Allah's greatest sign, the Holy Qur'an, was already among them. Allah the Exalted the High said: "O You, the last Prophet (s)! They will ask you for signs, but since the greatest divine sign is already among them, there is nothing for you. Indeed, you are the only guide who guides them by warning them and Allah's tradition has always been that He appoints someone as a leader for every nation so that he will lead them."

The meaning of Hadi in the Qur'an

The holy verse we mentioned in the above lines indicates that the earth will never remain devoid of a guide who calls the people towards the right path. This leader and guide can be either a prophet or someone other than a prophet, who [1] leads the people with permission of Allah the High." This verse does not speak of "Hadi" as a prophet. This is what Zamakhshari has written in Tafsir Kashaf; because limiting it to a prophet will exempt the verse from the time when there were no prophets among people and it is in contradiction with the holy verse, for it is clearly speaking of a guide and leader for people in every era, in such a manner that the earth does not remain free of his presence for a single day.

So who is this leader and guide in our times? We will once again refer to the Qur'an to find a suitable answer to this question. We find holy verses that show they have related the issue of guidance to Allah the Exalted the High, and then relate the guidance to those who guide the people towards the right path by Allah's will and permission. Allah the Exalted the High says:

1. **Tafsir al-Mizan** 1:305.

﴿قُلۡ هَلۡ مِن شُرَكَآئِكُم مَّن يَهۡدِيٓ إِلَى ٱلۡحَقِّۚ قُلِ ٱللَّهُ يَهۡدِي لِلۡحَقِّۗ أَفَمَن يَهۡدِيٓ إِلَى ٱلۡحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَن يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّن لَّا يَهِدِّيٓ إِلَّآ أَن يُهۡدَىٰۖ فَمَا لَكُمۡ كَيۡفَ تَحۡكُمُونَ﴾

"Say: Is there of your partners (whom ye ascribe unto Allah) one that lead to the Truth? Say: Allah lead to the Truth. Is He Who lead to the Truth more deserving that He should be followed, or he who find not the way unless he (himself) be guided. What ailed you? How judge ye?"[1]

This holy verse stresses the Qur'an's viewpoint about guidance towards the right path, which has been discussed in so many holy verses of the Qur'an. It quotes the guidance as being from Allah the Exalted the High: "Say that He is Allah who guides to the truth."

The holy verse explains that the person among the servants of Allah, which all must follow, can never be a person who cannot find his path unless he is guided by another person of his kind. Rather he should be someone who has received guidance directly from Allah the Exalted the High; as 'Allama Tabatabai has also written in his explanation of the verse that: "In this holy verse, there has been a comparison between the two sentences of (guides towards the truth) and (someone who does not lead.). Hence, it is necessary for there to be a comparison between being guided by another person and not finding the right path towards the truth, and guidance towards the truth on one's own. As a result, he who wants to guide others must be guided on his own and no one else must have guided him. Otherwise, the one who has been guided by another person will never be able to guide others towards the truth.

What this means is that this holy verse indicates the appearance. This is the best reason showing that this holy verse is based on the truth and not on metaphor; we use the word "Hadi" (guide) for whoever speaks of truth or guides us towards the right path, even if he does not believe in the truth and does not act accordingly, or when acting

1. *Surat Yunus, 10:35.*

accordingly, he has not understood the real meaning of the word, regardless of whether he has been guided on his own or he has been guided by another person.

However, guiding to the right path - leading others to the reality and the truth - is impossible for someone other than Allah the Glorious or for someone whom Allah the Exalted the High has guided. Only such a guided person can guide others towards the right path with the permission of Allah the Exalted the High. With what we mentioned about the holy verse and with the meanings we set forth in this regard, the following few problems appear:

Firstly: Saying "guiding to the truth" means to take the person to the truth and not only to show him the right path, because everyone can guide others to the right path by telling him of its qualities, regardless of whether he has reached this destination without any means in between or he has been guided by another person like him.

Secondly: By saying "no one but he who has been guided guides others," Allah the Exalted the High means someone who has already been guided, regardless of whether he has been guided on his own or by someone like him.

Thirdly: Being guided by the truth means to guide others to ultimate truth and this is the quality of those who have been directly guided, i.e. there is no other means between them and Allah the High, regardless of whether they have been guided from the very beginning or have been guided by the blessing of Allah afterwards, such as the Prophets (‘a), their administrators and other religious leaders.

However, "guidance" meaning to show others and explain the real path to them is not particularly related to those guided by Allah the High, His Prophets (‘a), the Imams (‘a) and their administrators, because Allah the High is narrating about the faithful people of Pharaoh:

﴿وَقَالَ ٱلَّذِىٓ ءَامَنَ يَـٰقَوْمِ ٱتَّبِعُونِ أَهْدِكُمْ سَبِيلَ ٱلرَّشَادِ﴾

"And he who believed said: O my people! Follow me. I will show you the way of right conduct".[1]

Nonetheless, addressing His Prophet (‘a), Allah the Exalted says:

﴿إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِى مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَـٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَهْدِى مَن يَشَآءُ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِٱلْمُهْتَدِينَ﴾

"Lo! Thou (O Muhammad) guide not whom thou love, but Allah guide whom He will. And He is best aware of those who walk aright."[2]

Along with other similar verses. Keeping in mind that the Prophet of Allah (s) was the most manifest leader leading the people towards the right path, the above-mentioned holy verse reveals the same issue. In the verses about taking one's soul and about the knowledge of the hidden, we can observe similar things, too. All these verses mean to say is that Allah the Exalted the High has this reality on His own, while other people with these qualities have gained them by the blessing of Allah and their possession is an indirect possession. The reason behind their possession is Allah's command as He has said:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَـٰهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَآ إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ ٱلْخَيْرَٰتِ وَإِقَامَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةِ وَإِيتَآءَ ٱلزَّكَوٰةِ ۖ وَكَانُوا۟ لَنَا عَـٰبِدِينَ﴾

"And We made them chiefs who guide by Our command, and We inspired in them the doing of good deeds and the right establishment of worship and the giving of alms, and they were worshippers of Us (alone)".[3]

1. *Surat Mu'min, 40:38.*
2. *Surat Qasas, 28:56.*
3. *Surat Anbiya, 21:73.*

In hadiths, too, what we observe is that guidance towards the truth is one of the positions of the Prophets (‘a) and the Imams of the Household (‘a).” We mentioned 'Allama Tabatabai's statements in brief until now. However, he has also discussed in detail some other theories when interpreting this holy verse; and in this way, he has explained that there is no correlation between them and the holy verse.[1]

What we understand as a result of pondering on this verse is that leading to the truth, i.e. leading those who have already been guided to the ultimate truth, only belongs to Allah the Exalted the High; at a lower level, it is for the people who have directly been guided by Allah the High, because such people achieve the greatest human abilities so that they become able to be guided directly by Allah. They will also lead others, regardless of whether they get this guidance through a revelation, if they are the Prophets (‘a), or by inspiration (*Ilham*) if they are not the Prophets (‘a). In this way, they become able to call the people and lead them towards the truth and towards the right path with the permission of Allah the Exalted the High. Referring to the holy verses of the Qur'an, we come to know that in them “*Amr Allah*” (with Allah's permission) has been used, which clearly tells us that only Allah's guidance makes them deal with the affairs of existence, because there is not a single holy verse found in the Qur'an with “*Amr Allah*” (with Allah's permission) in it; it only used in the sense of existential guardianship or including both existential as well as descriptive guardianship. Hence, we can conclude by saying that which 'Allama Tabatabai has written in al-Mizan: “The Imam is a guide who guides the people, for he is told to do so by an angel. Hence, according to its interior meaning, Imamate means a kind of guardianship over the people's actions.”[2]

A person guiding people towards Allah can interfere in the material world with the permission of Allah the Exalted the High and with the help of his existential guardianship, and, finally, understands the inner minds and reality of the servants of Allah, and provides them with whatever he thinks is in accordance with their condition. We have come to understand this reality by pondering on the holy verses

1. **Tafsir al-Mizan** 10:56 to 61.
2. **Tafsir al-Mizan** 1:272.

that indicate that there is always someone observing and supervising the actions and deeds of the people of one's era.

The guide is appointed by Allah

When referring again to the Holy Book of Allah, what we understand is that someone leading the people to the right path with Allah's permission is appointed by Allah the High Himself. This is what we clearly understand from Allah the Exalted saying:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَـٰهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا﴾

"And We made them chiefs who guide by Our command".[1]

This also refers to the issue of Imamate. According to this verse, the Imamate is a divine promise with which Allah the Exalted the High blesses His chosen servants, whom He has chosen from amongst all His servants. In our discussion about the verses from Surat Isra' and the Imam's (‘a) qualities, we have already indicated this.

Here we will once again refer to the holy verse from Surat R'ad regarding our topic. What we had come to know was that according to the holy verse, among every nation there is someone leading the people to the right path. This explanation had to be applied to a model. It was impossible for the holy verse to speak of a heavenly book; as we mentioned when explaining the verse of Surat Isra', saying that it is impossible for this verse to be about the Prophets (‘a), for we have already said that by limiting the verse to the Prophets (‘a) only, the periods of time with no Prophets (‘a) will be deducted from the holy verse, and it is against what the holy verse is saying for it includes all the ages and periods of time.

Also, it is impossible for us to believe that this holy verse is speaking about Allah the Almighty, because Allah's guidance includes all the eras without separating and naming a particular nation and, if so, it is also against what the holy verse is saying because it has used the word “Hadi” (the guide), which is a common word and requires the plural form.

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1. *Surat Anbiya, 21:73.*

In addition to all this evidence, the above-mentioned holy verse can be interpreted as Allah's guidance being carried for the people by the guides taken from among them. They are the people in direct communication with Allah the Exalted the High and have the ability to guide others. They are the people who have been directly guided by Allah the Almighty without any medium in between. We also mentioned the same thing while interpreting the verse of Surat Yunus. They are the people's guides and have been appointed by Allah the Exalted the High and guide the people only with the permission of Allah. All these points have already been explained in a demonstrative manner. We can see that the guide's qualities have been mentioned only on two occasions, and on both occasions the guide has been called "leader" (Imam). Both verses have insisted that they are chosen by Allah the Exalted the High to guide the people to the right path. One of the two verses is in Surat Anbiya, which we have discussed in the previous lines; and the second one is in Surat Sajdah, where Allah the Exalted says:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا﴾[1]

And when they became steadfast and believed firmly in Our revelations, We appointed from among them leaders who guided by Our command.

In any case, after considering and pondering on the verses, we realize that there is always someone guiding and calling towards Allah the Exalted, with His permission. He is chosen and appointed by Allah the Almighty. For every age and period of time, there is such a guide. Hence, the Earth will never remain empty of a guide with such qualities whether he is a Prophet (‘a) or not.

Since, in our time, no person with such qualities has been found and we have no information about the presence of such a person among any sect of the Muslims, and since we do not know about anyone guiding the people towards the right path with Allah's permission and having such qualities and that he has been appointed by Allah the Exalted the High for this purpose, no matter whatever sect he belongs

1. *Surat Sajdah, 32:24.*

to, and since we do not know about a person being a divine proof among the people, we have no option but to say that such a person in our time is hidden from our sight. While in occultation, he is carrying out his duties and responsibilities regarding the guidance of the people of his time. The people's benefit from his occultation is like their benefitting from the sun while it is covered by clouds. This is what the hadiths have also mentioned.[1]

This, furthermore, is what the Shi'ahs believe about Imam Mahdi (‘a) and his occultation.

1. Refer to the hadith which Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari has narrated from the Prophet of Allah (s): **Kamal al-Din** 1:353; **Kifaiat al-Athar** p. 53 etc.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE PROMISED MAHDI (AS) AND THE SIGNS OF HIS OCCULTATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE TRADITIONS NARRATED BY THE TWO PARTIES

Along with the holy verses we mentioned in the above lines, there are many hadiths with both Sunnite and Shi'ah chains of narrators quoting from the Prophet of Allah (s). Such hadiths are acceptable both to the Sunnites and Shi'ahs.[1] The topic is also confirmed by these narrations. These narrations have discussed in detail what was mentioned in the above verses in brief. Moreover, the picture and outline of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and his occultation drawn in the holy verses, has also been clear in these hadiths. As a result, these narrations show us the external model for the person whose qualities have been mentioned in the Qur'an in general.

We have chosen some successive and equivalent narrations[2] which are recorded in the six-fold accounts of the hadiths of Sunnites with authentic chains of narrations, because reasoning with such narrations can be easier and more effective. On the other hand, their interpretation and application are impossible unless they apply to the Promised Mahdi (‘a) according to the Shi'ahs' belief – especially in our time. Moreover, the Prophet of Allah (s), too, insisted in these narrations regarding their content, as we shall see.

1. Hadith of Thaqalayn

The hadith of Thaqalayn has been one of the successive hadiths, which a great number of narrators of both Shi'ah and Sunnite sects have recorded with authentic documents from a great number of the

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1. Narrations with no doubt regarding the authenticity of their chain of narrators are called “authentic” narrations.
2. For more information about successive, diffused or equivalent and hurried hadiths, please refer to hadith accounts.

companions of the Prophets (s). Ibn Hajar, one of the Sunnite scholars, has recorded more than twenty names in his book Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah[1], while others have named more than thirty companions of the Prophet (s) when narrating this hadith from the Prophet of Allah (s), as it is recorded in Sunan Tarmidhi[2] Hafiz Abul Fadhl, known as Ibn Qaysarani, one of the great Sunnite scholars, has written a separate book about the chain of narrators of this hadith.[3] The latest research in this regard has also confirmed this hadith to such an extent that there remains no doubt about it, as 'Allama Mir Hamid Hasan Musawi has done in his great encyclopedia named "Abaqat al-Anwar"; also other scholars have contributed valuable work.[4]

In the light of different narrations regarding this hadith, what we understand is that the Prophet of Allah (s) repeated this hadith on more than one occasion, every time with a little change in the words. Examples are the event of 'Arafah and Hujjat al-Wid'a, and that of Ghadir after Hujjat al-Wid'a, after returning from Taif, in Jahfah, when addressing those in the mosque after returning from Hujjat al-Wid'a and towards the last few days of his illness in his room, while there were a great number of companions present.[5] What all these tell us is the importance of the Prophet of Allah's (s) will. Moreover, it tells us that his hadith was a surety about Islam and the Muslims; otherwise, the Prophet of Allah (s), who was so kind and sincere with the Muslims and wanted to guide them, would never express such things repeatedly with a great number of Muslims present. This is especially when we see that the Prophet of Allah (s) himself prepares

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1. **Al-Sawa'aq al-Muhriqah** p. 150, printed in Egypt. Ibn Hajar has also insisted that this hadith is a successive one.
2. **Sunan Tarmidhi** 5:621-622; **Manaqib Ahl al-Bayt al-Nabi** Ch. 32
3. Sayyid Abul Aziz Tabataba'i, **Ahl al-Bayt fi al-Maktabat al-Arabiah** pp. 277-279.
4. Dar al-Tabligh Islami of Egypt has printed and published a detailed account, which has been compiled by one of the members of the publication regarding the same topic. In this book, the documents and names of the narrators of the hadith from the Sunnite reference books have been recorded.
5 Ibn Hajar, **Al-Sawa'aq al-Muhriqah** p. 148; **Ahl al-Bayt fi al-Maktabah al-Arabiah** p. 279.

the necessary conditions for making such an important announcement among the Muslims without waiting for someone from among those present to ask him about the issue.

In the light of some narrations, what we come to know is that this hadith carries the message of what the Prophet of Allah (s) wanted to write down for the Muslims towards the last few days of his life. When he asked the Muslims to provide him with pen and paper so that he could write for them so that they would not go astray after his time, we read in the hadith of "hiding the inkpot", which is also recorded in Sahih Bukhari and elsewhere.[1] However, a group refrained from allowing the Prophet (s) to write his will. The result was a dispute between them and the Prophet of Allah (s) asked them to leave without its having been written. This story has been recorded in detail in a hadith known as "the event of Thursday. "We can see that the phrase "so that you will never go astray after me", which has been used in previous hadith, is repeatedly used in the hadith of Thaqalayn, aswell; similarly suggesting that the Muslims be good towards members of the Household ('a) is also something which is repeated both in hadith of Thaqalayn and in the Prophet's ('a) sayings towards the last few hours of his life.

What we understand from the above lines is that the Prophet of Allah (s) certainly wanted to write down what he had spoken of in hadith of Thaqalayn; writing this in front of the companions of the Prophet could remove any kind of disagreement among them after his death. All we have said shows how important the context of hadith of Thaqalayn is. Otherwise, the Prophet of Allah (s), with the divine mission to guide all the nations of the world, would never have stressed this and insisted upon it. This is what we also understand from the context of hadith of Thaqalayn, in which the Prophet of Allah (s) has said that acting according to his testament would cause the Muslims to be delivered from misguidance. We will shortly discuss the hadith in more detail to confirm our claim in this regard.

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1. **Sahih Bukhari** 8:161, 7:9, 5:137, 4:65-66, 4:31, 1:37, from Dar al-Fikr print, from Istanbul print. And in all these narrations, the expression "so that you will not be misled after me" has been recorded regarding what the Prophet of Allah (s) wanted to write for the Muslims.

Proved to be a successive hadith, this fact provides the Muslims with the facility to rely on this hadith while discussing the doctrinal issues; and this has already been proved in Islamic theology. Therefore, it is also possible to rely on this hadith about the issue of Imamate.

Proving the successive aspect of the word "my Household ('a)" in the previous hadith

The successive part of this Holy hadith is the phrase in which the Prophet of Allah (s) has spoken of the Holy Qur'an and the Household ('a) as *'Thaqalayn'*, saying that whoever will cling to them, will be delivered until the Day of Judgment. This is what has been recorded in Bukhari's al-Tarikh al-Kabir, Muslim's Sahih, Turmithi's Sunan, Nisa'i's Khasaais, Ibn Maja's Sunan, Ahmad bin Hanbal's Musnad, and Hakim's Mustadrak - saying that the chain of narrators in this hadith are reliable for Bukhari - and Thahabi has also agreed with them. Moreover, a great number of Sunnite scholars have recorded this phrase.[1] What Muslim has written in his Sahih, narrating it from Zayd bin Arqam, is: 'One day the Messenger of Allah (s) addressed us near a pond called Khumm between Makkah and Madinah. He praised God and extolled Him and preached and reminded us. Then he said, "O people, I am only a human being and I am about to respond to the messenger of my Lord [i.e. the call of death]. I am leaving behind two precious things *(Thaqalayn)* among you. The first of the two is the Book of Allah. In it is guidance and light. So get hold of the Book of Allah and adhere to it… and my Ahl al-Bayt (Household). And then he said for three times that "I urge you to remember God regarding my Ahl al-Bayt" i.e. I recommend you not to cause them trouble, otherwise, Allah's wrath will descend upon you."[2]

In Sinan, Tarmidhi has also recorded the same hadith on his own authority from Abi Sa'id Khudri from the Prophet of Allah (s) that he said:

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1. Refer to: Sayyid Ali Milani, Arabic summarization related to documents of hadith of Thaqalayn, from 'Abaqat al-Anwar encyclopedia. This abstract has been printed twice: the first time in two volumes and the second time in three volumes.
2. **Sahih Muslim** 4:1873.

"I am leaving among you something which is very important and should be followed; you will not go astray if you get hold of it after I am gone, one part of it being more important than the other: Allah's Book, which is a rope stretched from Heaven to Earth, and my close relatives, who belong to my household. These two will not separate from one another till they come down to the reservoir, so consider how you act regarding them after my departure."[1]

Hakim has recorded the same hadith in Mustadrak, writing:

"I am about to answer the call (of death). Verily, I have left behind two precious things amongst you, one of which is greater than the other. The Book of Allah, the Exalted, and my Ahl al-Bayt (Household). So watch out how you treat these two after me, for verily they will not separate from each other until they come back to me by the side of the pond. Verily, Allah, the Almighty and the Glorious is my master *(mawla)* and I am the master of every believer. This ('Ali) is the master of whomever I am his master. O God, love whoever loves him and be the enemy of his enemy."[2]

In his book "Sawa'iq", Ibn Hajar has also narrated this narration in the following manner:

"I have left behind two precious things amongst you: The Book of Allah, the Exalted, and my Ahl al-Bayt (Household). You will never go astray after I am gone if you resort to them. Verily they will not separate from each other until they come back to me by the side of the Pond. Neither overtake them, nor remain behind, for you will be destroyed in both cases. And never try to teach them anything for they are more aware than all of you."[3]

Other versions of the same hadith, recorded by other Sunnite narrators, have also been recorded with similar words. All these versions have the phrase "Allah's Book and my Household" in common. Thus this phrase is a successive one. Hence, some of the changed and altered narrations with "my Sunnah", instead of "my Household" are not authentic. The reason behind this alteration is

1. **Sunan Tarmidhi** 5:662.
2. **Mustadrak al-Sahih ayn** 3:109.
3. **Al-Sawa'aq al-Muhriqah** p. 150; First chapter, the verses about the Household of the Prophet (s).

clear enough, namely meeting the political benefits of Umayyids and 'Abbassids. Moreover, the altered phrase has never been recorded in the famous Sunnite books of hadiths.[1] In this case, one has to say that they are among the weakest narrations, which have never been helpful for teaching someone and which are impossible to act upon, especially about important doctrinal affairs regarding the topic of the hadith.

Even if we consider the altered version of this narration to be authentic, as Hajar has claimed in *al-Sawa'aiq*, there is no contradiction between its altered version with the successive phrase, neither will it affect the important doctrinal aspect of the narration. Rather when combining both (altered and unchanged) hadiths, it can stress even more the reality that the Prophet Muhammad's (s) Sunnah is always with leaders from among his Household (‘a), for they have the knowledge of the Book and that of the Prophet's (s) Sunnah. This is what Ibn Hajar has also indicated when saying: “… The hadiths in which only Allah's Book has been mentioned means Allah's Book and my Sunnah, because Sunnah also tells about the Qur'an, and mentioning only “Sunnah” has made the Prophet (s) exempt from mentioning the Qur'an as well. As a result, we can say that the Prophet of Allah (s) has encouraged the Muslims to rely on three things: Allah's Book, his Sunnah and those from among the Household (‘a) with the knowledge of the Book and knowledge of the Sunnah. And what we understand from all this is that all these three will remain till the Day of Judgment.”[2]

This hadith indicates the presence of the Imam (‘a)

This hadith contains many indications of the presence of the Imam (‘a). To solve the greatest issues of Imamate, the scholars have relied on this hadith and have set forth their reasons based on Shi'ah

1. Refer to: **Risalat al-Thaqalayn** p. 18; printed by Dar al-Tabligh al-Islamiah in Egypt. Likewise, Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Hakim's research about the authenticity of this narration in the chapter about “Sunnah” in “Al-Usul al-Aammah li al-Fiqh al-Maqarin” about the indications of hadith of Thaqalayn.
2. **Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah** p. 150

belief regarding this hadith.[1] Here it will suffice to mention the most important reasoning of this hadith particularly related to our discussion.

1. This Holy hadith indicates that after the Prophet's (s) death, the only way to be delivered is to resort to both the Qur'an and the Prophet's (s) Household at the same time. "As long as you resort to them both." The Prophet (s) did not say that "as long as you resort to one of them." What this means is that relying on and resorting to one of them can never be enough, and it can never guarantee one's deliverance and prevent one from going astray; they must be together and each one guides the Muslim to resort to the other one, too. Thus a person resorting to only one of them and neglecting the other one is never truthful in his claim, because the Prophet of Allah (s) said: "they will never be separated from each other."

2. The Holy hadith has shown that the second "weighty thing" is the Prophet's ('a) pronouncement in the phrase "My progeny." Itrah according to linguistics means: "one's offspring." Azhari says: Tha'lab has narrated from Ibn A'rabi that he has said that "Itrah" means a person's son, his progeny and from his loins. Arabs do not know another meaning for 'Itrah' other than what we have already mentioned."[2]

In this way, the Prophet's (s) wives are exempt from the hadith's proof "*Itrah*." Even if we do not consider "Itrah" and only ponder on the word "Ahl al-Bayt", still the Prophet's (s) wives will be exempt from it, because the Muslim, in his book "Sahih," writes about the hadith of Thaqalayn: "Someone asked the person who had narrated the hadith from Zayd bin Arqam: 'Who are his Household ('a)? Are they his wives?' The person said: 'No. I swear by Allah that a woman lives with a man for some time and after being divorced by her husband, returns to her father and other paternal and maternal relatives; however, his household are his real family members and those

1. For example, refer to: Sayyid Ali Milani, hadith Thaqalayn, Tawatiruhu, Fiqhuhu."
2. Fayoumi, **Misbah al-Munir** p. 391, article number. 17.

remaining after him, whom it is haram to give charity to after his death."[1]

To whom does the prophetic tradition refer by the word: "Ahl al-Bayt" ('a)

After the revelation of the holy verse of "Purification", the Prophet (s) himself clarified the meaning and proof of this holy verse, for he particularly mentioned that the family members of Hazrat Fatima ('a) are those whom the holy verse of "Purification" is addressing. "For six consecutive months after the revelation of the holy verse, whenever passing Hazrat Fatima's ('a) house while going to offer the morning prayers, the Prophet of Allah (s) used to say: "O Household of Prayer, (the Holy Verse)." Ahmed bin Hanbal, too, has recorded this narration in his Masnad.[2]

This belief is also strengthened by the Prophet's (s) words in his famous hadith known as "Hadith of Kisa." In this hadith, the Prophet of Allah (s) has clearly said that only some people are his Household ('a) and he stopped his respected wife, the mother of the Faithful "Umm Salama" from coming under the veil, saying that she was a good-natured woman but not among his Household. Muslim in his "Sahih" and Suyuti in "*a-Durr al-Manthur*" has also recorded "the Hadith of Kisa" with several documents and with the Sunnite chain of narrators."[3]

What is certainly mentioned in all narrations in this regard is that the Prophet of Allah (s) counted Imam Ali ('a) a member of his Household ('a), although he was not one of the Prophet's (s) sons. This also becomes clear from what we mentioned above.

Fulfilling the required condition of the indication of hadith of Thaqalayn by presuming the infallibility of an Imam

Knowing the real meaning and evidence of the "Household and Itrah" of the Prophet of Allah (s), which has been mentioned in the above

1. **Sahih Muslim** 2:362.
2. **Masnad Ahmad bin Hanbal** 3:259.
3. Refer to: **Sahih Muslim** 7:130; Hakim in Mustadrak, saying that the chain of narrators in this hadith are reliable to Bukhari 3:146; **Al-Durr al-Manthoor** 5:198.

hadith, also tells us of the qualities of the second weighty thing i.e. that the Household (‘a) should have infallibility. This is what we easily understand from the Holy Verse of “Purification.” This is confirmed by saying that both of them will never be separated from each other, as shown by using the Arabic word “lan”, negating forever. Certainly not even one word used in the Qur'an has been used without a purpose. This is why the impossibility of separation between the second weighty thing – that is the Household – from the first weighty thing – that is the Holy Qur'an– also confirms their infallibility; because if they are not Infallibles they can leave the Qur'an and separate themselves from the Qur'an, while there is the chance of making mistakes or committing sins. While, the Holy hadith has negated forever such a separation between them. This point itself indicates the infallibility of the purified household [ahl ul-Bayt].

Moreover, in the above-mentioned holy hadith, the Muslims are commanded to resort to both of these two things at the same time. This is an absolute command, for we do not see and observe any kind of exception in this regard. This indicates that this rule and command is for every age and era and in every situation. Thus if it is permissible for the purified Itrah to perform actions contradictory to infallibility, then it means that the Prophet of Allah (s) has commanded the Muslims to resort to the Household even in actions clearly in contradiction with the Qur'an, which is impossible for the Prophet (s).

In the light of this, what becomes clear is that the Prophet's (s) people who have not reached the level of purification are exempt from being the evidences of the second weighty thing. Analyzing this Holy hadith, Ibn Hajar has written: “The people who must be followed according to this Holy hadith are the people who have complete command and full knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (s); according to this hadith, they will never be separated from the Qur'an, unless they meet the Prophet (s) near the pond. The previous narrations also say: “Do not teach them anything, for they are more learned than you are,” which also confirms this. They are different from all scholars and intellectuals, for Allah the Exalted the High has kept away from them every kind of unclean living and sin

and has made them purified and has blessed them with great virtues and other blessings."[1]

History has also confirmed that after the Prophet of Allah (s), only Ali (‘a) and the rest of the eleven Imams (‘a), the sons of Hazrat Zahra (‘a) and the daughter of the Prophet (s), i.e. his offspring, enjoyed these qualities. Certainly, it has been proved that Imam Ali's (‘a) and Hazrat Fatima's (‘a) children are known as the Prophet's (s) offspring, because prophet Isa (‘a) has also been connected to prophet Ibrahim (‘a) as his offspring on his mother's side and this is what the Holy Qur'an has confirmed.

The Imamite Shi'ahs have a consensus among them on the Imams' (‘a) infallibility. Other Sunnite sects also have a consensus about their purification and love. Not a single person has ever claimed that they have committed the slightest sin, although the governments of their times were trying to find them performing something in contradiction to Infallibility so that they could use their mistake as a means to take revenge. This is what history has also shown.[2]

As for the hadith's time, the order is for all ages and it is an absolute order; and this is what we understand from the Prophet's (s) words "after me." As a result, we can say that this is an order till the Day of Judgment, because the Prophet Muhammad's (s) religion is the last religion and there is no other religion after his for he is the last Prophet of Allah. Since the Holy Qur'an is protected by Allah the Almighty, it is necessary for the Itrah (the Household) also to be protected and kept by Allah till the Day of Judgment, for Itrah is the second of the two weighty things and will never be separated from the Qur'an. In the light of what we have said above, what we understand is that this successive Holy hadith is explicitly confirming that there must be a representative of the Household of the Prophet (s) in every era, who, necessarily, should have the quality of infallibility and should always be with the Qur'an. So the faithful servants of Allah, following this hadith, turn to that representative and the chosen Imam

1. **Al-Sawa'aq al-Muhriqah** p. 151
2. Refer to: About the lifestyle of the Imams (‘a), compiled by the Sunnite master of hadiths, most of whom, such as Ibn Tolon Dimashqi have written special accounts regarding the lifestyle of the twelve Imams (‘a).

(‘a) to guide the people to the right path; and in this way, follow the Prophet's (s) will. Otherwise, the message in this hadith of the Prophet (s), who never speaks unless he is asked by Allah the Exalted, will be considered void. As a result, we can say that there must be an Imam (‘a) from the Household of the Prophet (s) in our time that is the evidence of the second weighty thing and it is possible for us to resort to him. A number of great Sunnite scholars have understood this reality and some of them have even mentioned the issue clearly, like Ibn Hajar Haythami, when he says: “In the hadith saying that the Muslims must resort to the Household (‘a) it has been pointed out that in every era there will be someone from the Household (s) and this issue will continue till the Day of Judgment. In this way, the people will always be able to resort to him. It is because the Qur'an will also remain till the Day of Judgment. This is why they are the source of protection for those living on the surface of the earth. There is also the previous narration: “In every generation, there are some just people from my Household (‘a).” This also confirms the same thing.[1]

Whom does the hadith of Thaqalayn currently refer to?

We concluded in the previous discussion that the Holy hadith has clearly indicated someone from the Household of the Prophet (‘a) in our time who, standing beside the Qur'an, is capable of being turned to by the people and also enjoys infallibility. However the question arising here is who this person is.

It is as clear as crystal that in today's world there is no one claiming such a high post and there is no such person with the qualities mentioned in the hadith. If we say that such a person does not exist here, it means that we have gone against what the hadith of Thaqalayn is saying. Hence we are left with no other option but to accept that such a person exists but is in occultation. This is what the Shi'ahs believe about the Promised Mahdi (‘a), based on many rational and traditional bases. In this way, they believe in Imam Mahdi's (‘a) presence but at the same time believe that he is living in occultation, while not refraining from showering his benefits and

1. **Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah** p. 151.

blessings upon people, as the sun never refrains from causing the people to benefit from it even when it is behind clouds.

2. Narration of the "Twelve Caliphs"

The hadith regarding the twelve caliphs, twelve successors, twelve chiefs or twelve guardians have been recorded and narrated by the authors of "Sahih" or "Musnads" with an authentic chain of Jabir bin Samrat. These have also been narrated by Anas bin Malik, Ibn Mas'ud, Abdullah bin Umar and Huthaifah bin Yaman and all chains of their narrators reach the Prophet of Allah (s). The same hadith, though in more detail, has also been narrated by the followers of the Household (Shi'ah). Ayatullah Sheikh Lutfullah Safi has collected a number of 270 hadiths in this regard.[1]

As a result, we can say that there is complete agreement regarding these hadiths among the different sects of Islam; or at least, there is no doubt about the common parts of all these hadiths and none of the Islamic sects have doubted it. Despite the fact that the hadith narrated by the Sunnite chain of transmitters lack the detail of the same hadith when transmitted by the Shi'ah chain of transmitters - and the reason behind this difference is also clear enough -we mention here only the hadith from authentic Sunnite books and will try to find their evidence, so that what we deduct from them as a result is authority and acceptable to all Muslims.

3. The common words of the narrations

In Sahih Bukhari narrated from Jabir bin Samarah on his own authority said: "I heard the Holy Prophet (s) saying: 'Twelve chiefs will come. Then the Prophet (s) said something else which I could not hear. My father told me that the Holy Prophet (s) said: 'They are all from Quraysh."

Muslim has also narrated this hadith in his Sahih with different chains of transmitters from Jabir bin Samarah, though with different words. In some of his narrations, we read: "This will not end unless twelve caliphs have come …

1. Refer to: his book, Muntakhab al-Athar fi al-Imam al-Thani 'Ashar.

As long as twelve men will take charge of people's affairs, their affairs will be dealt with correctly…

Islam will always be liked as long as there twelve caliphs come …"

In all these narrations, it has been related that Jabir did not hear the rest of the news and his father told him that the Prophet of Allah (s) said: "All of the twelve people are from Quraysh." And the last phrase has been recorded in many versions of this hadith. Tarmidhi has also recorded the same narration in his book, writing: "And there will come twelve chiefs after me."

Abu Dawud narrated the narration as: "This religion will always be loved until twelve caliphs." Then the people said "Takbir" and were overjoyed. This was when the Prophet (s) said something, which I could not discern. I said to my father: 'O father, what did the Prophet (s) say?' My father replied: 'All of them will be from Quraysh."

Ahmad has also recorded this narration in his Musnad in many ways, such as: "This religion will always be as it is until the Day of Judgment is here…"

In some of his recorded narrations, the Prophet's (s) words have been recorded as: "This religion will always be victorious against whoever stands against it; an opponent will never harm the religion until twelve chiefs from my Ummah come …"

According to another narration, the Prophet of Allah (s) expressed this hadith at Arafat. There is another narration saying that this hadith was told by the Prophet of Allah (s) on the Friday night of the same day that Aslama was stoned to death. In some of these narrations, it has been recorded that the Prophet of Allah (s) then continued saying: "Whenever Allah the Almighty and Glorious wants to bless any of you with His blessings, he should start with his own family; and I will be waiting for you all at the pond before you reach there."

In some of the narrations, it is recorded that a group of people came to the Prophet (s) and asked him about the period after the twelve people. The Prophet of Allah (s) answered them saying: "chaos."

In Mu'jam Kabir, Tabarani has also recorded this narration and has added to its beginning: "For this nation, there will be twelve guardians, who will not be harmed, even if the nation leaves them."

Muttaqi Hindi has also recorded the same narration in Kanz al-Ammal from Anas bin Malik with the words: "As long as there are the twelve people from Quraysh, this religion will always be as it is and after these twelve people have gone, the land will swallow all the people on it."[1]

This narration indicates Imam Mahdi's ('a) presence

This was what has been recorded in the authentic Sunnite books. After we have given some examples of this narration, we will deal with the text and context of the hadith along with its indications:

In the light of all narrations about this hadith, what we understand is that the Prophet of Allah (s) issued this hadith in a very important sermon, which he (s) gave the Muslims towards the last days of his life. Some of these narrations also explain that this sermon was given at the time of Hujjat al-Wid'a at Arafat, and this is the same famous sermon in which the Prophet of Allah (s) commanded the nation to turn to the Qur'an and the Household ('a). Now we know that according to the hadith of Thaqalayn there will certainly be someone from the Household (s) till the Day of Judgment, someone who will deserve to be turned to along with the Qur'an. Hujjat al-Wid'a was on the same pilgrimage to the Ka'bah, after which the Prophet of Allah (s) also declared and appointed Imam Ali ('a) as the Muslims' guardian and the authority after himself (s) and successor.

Such closeness among the three hadith and keeping them together towards the last days of the Prophet's (s) life, and the great importance which the Prophet of Allah (s) gave to these hadith, explains how important their context is; they relate to something that guaranteed individuality as well as social deliverance and would lead Islam on the right path after the Prophet's (s) death.

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1. To read about these narrations and to understand their sources, refer to: **Muntakhab al-Athar and Mu'jam al-Ahadith of Imam Mahdi ('a)** 2:255-265, along with Ahadith al-Mahdi fi Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal.

All these three narrations have in common that they relate to the future. Hence, it is impossible to say that by these hadith, the Prophet of Allah (s) only wanted to predict a happening from the unseen world which had to happen after his death.

Such perception from these hadith does not match the great importance given to these hadith by the Prophet of Allah (s) when preaching them. It is very clear that the Prophet of Allah (s) preached this hadith towards the last few days of his life, for he had a great love for his nation and wanted to lead them to what would protect them from going astray after his death. It was nothing other than what we have also read in hadith of Thaqalayn. Therefore words like "the twelve Imams" or the "twelve caliphs" are used, informing the people of their appearance after the Prophet of Islam (s) to protect the Muslims and to protect Islam after the death of the Prophet (s) and as Allah's ultimatum for the people. Certainly this is the most important point and needs to be taken very seriously as an authentic point so that this hadith can be analyzed in the best possible manner and we can understand of whom it speaks.

Relation between hadiths of Hujjat al-Wid'a

In light of these three hadith which were pronounced about a single issue, what we understand is that considering the relation of this hadith to the first two hadiths, which the Prophet of Allah (s) issued on the occasion of Hujjat al-Wid'a, or at least in the same days which were the Prophet's (s) last days, this helps us considerably to understand this Holy hadith in the best possible manner. The reality is that these three hadiths, when put together, present to us a complete and clear picture of guidance and guarantee their progression after the Prophet's (s) death.

As we mentioned earlier, according to the hadith of Thaqalayn, the Muslim nation's deliverance after the Prophet of Allah (s) depends on their resorting to the Qur'an and his Itrah and there always being someone from the Prophet's Household (s) in every era who is capable of being turned to by the people and who, along with the Qur'an, is capable of guiding the people and delivering them from going astray.

The hadith of Ghadir, too, explains that after the Prophet of Allah (s), it is Imam Ali (‘a) who is the Divine Guardian of Allah for the people; it is obligatory for the people to resort to his guardianship, as it was obligatory for them to resort to the Prophet's (s) guardianship before him. The reason behind this is that the Prophet of Allah (s) first asked the people to confirm that he was more capable from other faithful people, and when this was confirmed, he said: “Of whom I am his guardian, this (Ali) is also his guardian.”[1]As for the hadith of the twelve leaders, it clarifies that Allah's religion will remain as it is with the help of these Imams (‘a) with the same number, no less than that and no more than that; and that resorting to these leaders will always allow people suitable guidance.

Hence, the picture drawn by these three hadiths is that deliverance from going astray and the protection of religion of Islam is possible only with two elements: resorting to the Qur'an and resorting to the purified Itrah. No era will remain without any of them. The first of the two is Imam Ali (s) and there are twelve Imams (‘a) – including Imam Ali (‘a). All these three hadiths were issued during the Prophet's (s) pilgrimage to Ka'bah, or at least in the same era i.e. towards the last few days of the Prophet's (s) blissful life with the single target of guiding the Muslims towards the right path and preventing them from being misled after the Prophet of Allah (s).

Evidence of the twelve caliphs

When referring to historical events, we realize that we cannot find more suitable evidence for what the Prophet of Allah (s) predicted about the twelve leaders from the Household (‘a) starting with Imam Ali (‘a) and ending with Imam Mahdi (‘a), for they are twelve in number which exactly matches the Prophet of Allah's (s) prediction. As a result, if we want to prove the prophethood of the last Prophet (s), we must say that only these personalities - Imam Ali (‘a) to Imam Mahdi (‘a) - are the evidence of the Prophet's (s) hadith and no one else has ever claimed such a thing.

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1. For more information about hadith of Ghadir, its succession and its indications, refer to the encyclopedia of al-Ghadir, written and compiled by 'Allama Amini (may his soul rest in peace), along with the volume of the 'Abaqat al-Anwar, which particularly deals with this narration, and some other writings.

Since all sects of Islam have witnessed the death of eleven Imams (‘a) from the Household of the Prophet (s), and it is proved for the Shi'ahs that the twelfth Imam (‘a) is still alive, and the hadith also indicates and insists that this chain of the twelve leaders will continue till the Day of Judgment, we are left with no other option but to accept the twelfth Imam's (‘a) presence. Since everyone knows that he is not apparently present among the people, we have to say that he is living in occultation and with his presence there, Allah's religion is continuing as it is. Hence this Holy hadith indicates the presence of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and his being in occultation according to Shi'ah belief.

Analyzing the hadith

Refraining from putting this hadith with the first two hadith, the hadith of Ghadir and hadith of Thaqalayn, if we only analyze this hadith, the result will be the same as above. For this purpose, we will rely on the indications in the hadith itself as recorded in the Sunnite accounts of hadith. From the context of the hadith, what we understand is that the Prophet of Allah (s) has given the good news of the appearance of twelve men as the Prophet's (s) successors among the Muslims, for the Prophet (s) said: “They will come after my death”, i.e. these twelve men will appear as the Prophet's (s) successors from the time right after the demise of the Prophet (s) till the Day of Judgment; especially, by what has been recorded in Sahih Muslim and other similar books about this hadith which state that the Prophet of Allah (s) said: “This religion (Islam) will not come to an end.” This also confirms what we said in the above lines.

Hence, the qualities discussed in this Holy hadith can be applied only to twelve people after the demise of the Prophet (s) and no more than that; otherwise, the Prophet (s) would not mention the number. Now we have to see who these twelve people are.

To answer to this we first need to refer to the context of the hadith, so that first we realize the qualities of the twelve men in the light of the hadith, and then we can see to whom these qualities apply.

The hadith tells us that they are chiefs, they are from Quraysh, they are the successors of the Prophet (s), Islam will always be loved due to them, religion will always be strong due to them, they are the

guardians of the Islamic nation, a group of Muslims will refrain from following them and another group of Muslims will show enmity against them. Now, we should analyze and study each of these qualities in detail.

The meaning of their being from Quraysh is clear and needs no further explanation. A great number of Islamic sects have consensus on this point, that for the leadership and caliphate of the Muslim it is necessary for the caliph to be from Quraysh. The first meaning of the "caliph or chief" coming into one's mind is that such a person is the successor of the Prophet (s) in dealing with the Muslims' affairs, or he is someone who takes charge of dealing with Muslims' affairs. By saying this, does it mean to indicate those people who took charge of Muslim government after the demise of the Prophet (‘a)?

Certainly, we cannot agree on this meaning, for there are other narrations too, whose authenticity is proved for the Sunnites; they clarify that this meaning of caliphate does not last more than thirty years after the Prophet's (s) demise, and then it changes into monarchy. These types of narrations have been recorded in Sahih Muslim and Sahih Bukhari.[1] Such narrations prevent applying this quality to the above-mentioned people (the caliphs). On the other hand, the holy hadith speaks of the continuation of the twelve chiefs until the Day of Judgment. Thus it is impossible to apply this holy hadith to the people who took charge of government after his demise.

History as a witness

The history of Islam has also negated the saying that the real evidence of the above-mentioned hadith are those who took the charge of caliphate after the demise of the Prophet (s), because those appearing as caliphs after the Prophet (s) were much more than twelve in number.

There is no harm in saying that some of those mentioned in the hadith also took the charge of the government among the great number of caliphs; these were the people qualifying for the qualities mentioned in the holy hadith.

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1. Refer to: **Mu'jam Ahadith al-Imam al-Mahdi** 1:16-38.

Therefore, applying the word "caliphate" in its common sense among the Muslims is something which is certainly rejected by the Holy hadiths; this meaning of the caliphate was removed very soon after the demise of the Prophet (s). Another statement is that the twelve people were of different ages, which is also rejected by the hadith, which clearly indicates the continuation of the twelve caliphs till the Day of Judgment without any gap between them. However, there has been a gap between the caliphs; we will discuss it in detail below.

Therefore, the meaning of "caliph" as used in this holy hadith should be applied to those who directly came into power and those who did not take charge of government. In other words, the Prophet (s) means to indicate his successors as administrators regarding religious affairs, guardianship of his nation and guiding the nation towards the right path, regardless of whether his successor has taken government or not. The Prophet (s) himself also tried to carry out his responsibilities as guardian of the Ummah and lead them to the right path, under whatever conditions, regardless of whether he was trying to preach secretly in Makkah, or when he started openly preaching his religion and faced great troubles created by unbelievers, or when he went to Medina and established his own government and rule. In all the above-mentioned conditions and situations, the Prophet (s) defended religion, protected it and called the people towards it; it was necessary that he should first establish his own government, too, although, the Prophet of Allah (s) was the most suitable person for taking charge of government compared with others.

The Prophet's (s) comparing his twelve successors with the "twelve chiefs" of Israel and Mose's administrators, as recorded in Ibn Mas'ud's hadith in Ahmad bin Hanbal's Musnad as well as a few other books, also indicates the same reality.[1] The hadith itself also indicates this point, for it relates the presence of these leaders and how they will protect and establish the religion of Islam. Therefore, the twelve men mentioned in the Prophet's (s) hadith are his successors in guardianship of the religion and in guiding people towards the right path.

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1. **Musnad Ahmad** 1:398; Tabarani, **Mu'jam al-Kabir** 10:195; Hakim, **Mustadrak** 4:501.

There is no gap between the twelve caliphs

Saying that the twelve caliphs are those who will continue Allah's religion is another good reason that there is no gap between them from the time starting right after the demise of the Prophet (s) until the Day of Judgment, because if we believe in a gap between them, since the establishment and protection of religion depends on them, it means that we believe that in their absence the religion is also removed and invalidated - this contradicting the Holy hadith, which clearly states: "This religion will always remain as it is;" or "The religion of Islam will always remain favourable."

This is why we cannot consider those people to be the proofs of the above-mentioned hadith, dispersed in the history of Islam from the aspect of time; rather we cannot consider any time period remaining without them. Thus these twelve leaders should certainly succeed each other.

Saying that Allah's religion will be established and continued by them clarifies another point, too, and that is: "The Prophet's (s) caliphate and succession has been used in its general and common meaning, which we have already indicated; and on a basic level, it consists of the Prophet's (s) succession for protection of the religion, guidance and calling the people towards it. And this quality enables them to lead the Muslim nation and take the responsibility of their religious guardianship, which, according to the hadith of Ghadir, is from the Prophet's (s) guardianship.

This is also what demands that they be perfectly aware of Allah's religion and act accordingly, so that they will be able to protect and call the people towards it. In some narrations about this hadith, we read: "They all act according to the religion and guidance", which also indicates what we mentioned in the above lines.[1]

In light of what we have mentioned up till now, we come to know about another quality of the twelve caliphs, i.e. they will face different types of opposition and the Ummah will not always follow them. However, they will not be harmed by these issues. In other

1. Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani, **Fath al-Bari fi Sharh Sahih Bukhari** 3:184, baab Istakhlaf.

words, their enmity and leaving them alone - and if they were not too many, the hadith would never mention this point - will not stop them from carrying out their responsibilities, these being to re-establish and protect the religion of Islam and bring back its lost honour, despite all difficulties and problems. However, when doing a survey in the pages of history, we see that the political system of Islam has been insulted so many times and apparently the people who took the charge of caliphate were those who were never suitable and were not suitable to be called the Prophet's (s) actual successors. At such times, it was the twelve Imams (‘a), who protected the religion of Allah and kept it alive.

With all these words, we should now ask to whom these qualities recorded in our Sunnite brothers' books can be applied.

Imams from the Household (‘a); the only possibly referred to example of the hadith

Historical reality has proved that the only proofs with these qualities and specialties are the twelve Imams (‘a) of the Household of the Prophet (s). They are the only people who have been of that number and the qualities mentioned in the hadith are also applicable only to them. We will now discuss this application in detail:

The reasons for the application of the hadith to the Imams (‘a)

Firstly: The holy hadith clearly indicates that these qualities are a must for the twelve leaders, for these qualities enable them to protect the religion.

In other words, all these twelve caliphs have always carried out their responsibilities for the same purpose and that is protecting and preaching the religion of Islam, and, like the Prophet of Allah (s), they have always tried to achieve the same target. Based on the historical evidences, all these qualities were and are in the twelve Imams of the Household of the Prophet (s). It has also been proved that with them was the Prophet's (s) knowledge and the Prophet of Allah (s) made a will about their succession; as mentioned in the hadith of Thaqalayn, the Prophet (s) said that resorting to them is the means of deliverance from going astray.

In addition to all this, according to historical proofs, a great number of Muslims, including the founders of the four Sunnite sects, have acquired their religious learning from the Imams of the Household of the Prophet (s). Different accounts of narrations have recorded how the people referred to them and how they needed them regarding their religious knowledge, and it has been recorded that they never needed to learn anything else from anyone in this regard.

The practical conduct of these Imams (‘a) has also been recorded in different books compiled by the Muslims. Their sacrifices for the religion of Islam, preaching different Islamic sciences and helping the Muslims against cultural attacks have been proved, along with the reality that they revived the religion of Islam. They were the most suitable people for the Prophet's (s) succession and for the Muslims' guidance along the right path. For example, Thahabi, a Sunnite scholar, has written about the suitability of Imam Hasan (‘a), Imam Husayn (‘a), Imam Zain al-Abidin (‘a) and Imam Baqir (‘a) for the post of caliphate, writing: “Likewise, Ja’far Sadiq (‘a) has been a great person and one of the leading scholars and is more suitable for the post of caliphate compared with his contemporary caliph “Abu Ja’far” Mansoor. Likewise, his son “Musa bin Ja'far” (‘a) has also been a great personality and more suitable for the post of caliphate as compared to the caliph of his time “Harun al-Rashid.”[1]

***Secondly**:* Based on historical evidence, the Imams' (‘a) lifestyle also confirms another part of the hadith that says: “They will face the enemies' enmity and the unfaithfulness of their companions.” However, these problems will never affect their basic responsibility which is to protect and revive the religion of Islam. In any case, it is a certain historical fact that they will always face trouble from the ruler of their time; governments will try to remove them. This is what happened with Imam Husayn (‘a) and his honourable companions in the event of Karbala. Or they will encounter troubles like

1. Refer to: Sheikh Asad Haider, Al-Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) wa al-Mazahib al-Arba'ah. Also, the sayings about these twelve Imams (‘a) recorded in Tarikh Dimashq of Ibn 'Asakir, Tarikh Baghadad of Khatib Baghadadi, Sawa'aq al-Muhriqah of Ibn Hajar , Sirat A’alam al-Nubala’of Thahabi, Wafiat al-'Ayan of Ibn Khalkan etc. the people from different Muslim sects, who have written about the lifestyle of the Imams (‘a).

imprisonment, martyrdom or poisoning. This was what made it necessary for the twelfth Imam, Imam Mahdi (‘a), to go into occultation. In the meanwhile, all sorts of pressures, troubles, enmities and deceits could not stop them from carrying their main responsibility, i.e. the protection and preaching of the religion of their grandfather. We can see that the hadith recorded in the accounts of their followers contain solutions to all mankind's needs and requirements in different aspects of their individual as well as their social life.[1]

***Thirdly**:* Another quality discussed in the holy hadith and only applicable to the Shi'ah Imams (‘a) is their appearance one after another without a gap from the time right after the demise of the Prophet (s) till the Day of Judgment. This is like a golden chain which cannot be broken by enmity and deceit, although these problems caused the Imam of the age (‘a) to go to occultation. In this way, the Imam's (‘a) role of protecting the religion while being in occultation started in different ways. As mentioned in the narrations, it has been proved that the people can benefit from the Imam of the time (‘a) while he is in occultation just as they can benefit from the sun while it is behind the clouds.[2]

This shows how well the school of the Household has explained the duration from the demise of the Prophet (s) to the Judgment Day, which is a long time, with twelve caliphs, who will always keep Islam alive, especially when the holy hadiths consider them to follow one after another till the Day of Judgment.

In short, this hadith, on which all the Muslims are agreed, indicates the presence and occultation of Imam Mahdi (‘a), because, as mentioned in the hadith, it cannot refer to anyone other than the

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1. These hadith have been brought together in the great accounts of hadiths such as 'Allama Majlisi's Bihar al-Anwar and Sheikh Hurr Amali's Wasail al-Shi'ah.

2. The people benefitting from the Imam of Time (‘a) is possible in different ways such as the letters sent by the Imam (‘a) for the faithful people, in which he answered their questions about different religious affairs. Many of these letters have been mentioned in the books written on occultation. They can also be seen in such books as: **Kalimat al-Imam al-Mahdi** and **Sahifah Mahdawiah** etc.

twelve Imams from the Household (‘a), the last of whom - Imam Mahdi (‘a) - was compelled by his enemies and deceitful people to go into concealment.

Agreement on the point that Imam Mahdi (‘a) is the last of the twelve caliphs

Many Sunnite scholars - such as Abu Dawud in his Sunan[1] - have agreed with the Shi'ahs about the awaited Mahdi (‘a) saying he is the twelfth of the twelve caliphs, whose appearance was predicted by the Prophet of Allah (s). The jurisprudential association associated with the main branch of “Rabitat al-'Alam al-Islami”, while answering the question of a person from Kenya about Imam Mahdi the Awaited (‘a), has written: “He is the twelfth of the caliphs, whom the Prophet of Allah (s) has predicted, and it has also been mentioned in our books.”[2]

Maybe this fatwa is based on another hadith, too, which is known as the hadith of “Al-Ummah al-Dhahirah al-Qaimah bi Amr Allah”, and which discussed the evidence of the twelve Imams (‘a). As we will see, this hadith has clarified that the last of the twelve Imams (‘a), who will spread Allah's command on the surface of the earth, is the promised Mahdi (‘a).

4. The hadith of “the victorious Ummah of him who will spread Allah's command”

This is one of the most famous hadith recorded in the Sunnite traditional accounts along with the famous “six books.” For example, only Ahmad bin Hanbal narrated this hadith with a chain of twenty-seven transmitters.[3]

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1. Refer to: Sheikh Abdul Muhsin al-Ibad in **'Aqidah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Athar fi al-Mahdi al-Muntadhar**, volume three of the magazine under the title of “Al-Jami'at al-Islamiah”, first year, number three, Thi Qa'dah, 1388 A.H.
2. Refer to: **Ahadith al-Mahdi min Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal** pp. 162-166, with the picture of the above-mentioned fatwa in it.
3. Refer to: Sayyid Muhammad Jawad Jalali, **Ahadith al-Mahdi (‘a) min Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal** pp. 67-68.

In his Sahih, Bukhari has recorded this hadith with: "Some people from among my nation will always remain victorious and while carrying Allah's command, the Last Day will come."[1]

As for Bukhari, in his "Tarikh", along with Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah, Tarmithi, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Hakim and some others have also recorded the same hadith, writing: "A group from my Ummah will always be on the truth, till by Allah the Glorious the High's Command the Last Day will come."[2]

Bukhari in Sahih, along with Muslim, Ahmad and Ibn Majah have recorded the same hadith writing: "Allah makes a jurisprudent, whoever He wants to bless with His blessings. There will always be a group among this nation (the Muslims) who will act on the basis of Allah's commands, and whom the enemies' enmity will never cause harm, until Allah's command about the Day of Judgment will come, while they are still victorious and superior."[3]

Muslim and others have narrated the same narration from Jabir bin Samarah, writing: "This religion (Islam) will always remain as it is with a group of Muslims making efforts for it until the Day of Judgment will come."[4]

In the same narration, it has been mentioned that the Prophet of Allah (s) issued this hadith on the occasion of Hujjat al-Wid'a. Jabir, the narrator of the hadith of twelve Imams (‘a) also belongs to Quraysh.

In Muslim's narration, we read: "There is always a group among my Ummah who will strive and fight for the cause of Allah. They are always victorious against their enemies, and the enemies' enmity will never harm them, until the Day of Judgment comes."[5]

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1. **Sahih Bukhari** 4:252.
2. **Tarikh Bukhari** 4:12/hadith 1797; **Sahih Muslim** 3:1523/hadith 1920; **Sunan Abu Dawud** 4:97/hadith 4202; **Ibn Majah** 1:5, B 1/hadith 10; **Tarmithi** 4:504/hadith 2229; **Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal** 2:321.
3. **Sahih Bukhari** 4:12; **Sahih Muslim** 3:1524/hadith 1037; **Musnad Ahmad** 4:101; **Ibn Majah** 1:5, B 1/hadith 7.
4. **Sahih Muslim** 3:1524/hadith 1922; **Musnad Ahmad** 5:92-94; **Mustadrak Hakim** 4:449.
5. **Sahih Muslim** 3:1524-1525, B. 53/hadith 1924

Abu Dawud, Ahmad, Hakim and others have recorded this hadith in their books, writing: "There will always be a group among my Ummah who are victorious and on the right path. They will never fear the enemies' enmity, until the Messiah and the Antichrist will appear (the latter of whom) they will fight against."[1]

In another narration which Bukhari has narrated in his "Tarikh" and Ahmad has narrated in his Musnad, and in which according to Kashmiri the people in the chain of transmitters are all reliable and truthful, we read: "There is always a victorious and righteous group among my Ummah, who always dominate their enemies, until Allah the Exalted commands and Isa bin Maryam (‘a) descends from the heaven."[2]

In another narration narrated by Muslim and Ahmad, we read: "There will always be a group among my Ummah who will remain victorious till the Day of Judgment. Then he said: Then Isa son of Maryam (‘a) will descend and their chief will say to him: come nearer and offer a prayer for us (so that we will follow you), but he refuses and says: No, some of you are the chiefs of the rest so that Allah the Almighty will always make this Ummah honourable."[3]

As explained by Jabir bin Samarah in the narrations recorded by Muslim, Ahmad and Hakim - which we have already explained - this hadith was issued by the Prophet of Allah (s) at Hujjat al-Wid'a. This is the same journey as that when the Prophet (s) issued some other hadiths such as Thaqalayn, Ghadir and the hadith of the twelve Imams (‘a). Therefore it is possible for us to study this hadith within the same framework as programs made for the guidance of the Muslims towards something that will always guarantee their right path after the demise of the Prophet (s) and will always free them from going astray and from dying in ignorance. Moreover, this hadith also speaks of that of which the previous three hadiths speak.

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1 . **Musnad Ahmad** 3:434; **Sunan Abu Dawud** 3:4/hadith 2484; **Mustadrak Hakim** 2:71.

2. **Tarikh Bukhari** 5:451/hadith 1468; **Musnad Ahmad** 4:429.

3. **Mu'jam Ahadith al-Imam al-Mahdi (‘a)** 1:51-68; in this book, for each of these narrations, a great number of sources have been mentioned from the authentic traditional accounts of Sunnites. In this chapter, we selected some of them and presented them both from the main contexts and the footnotes.

We understand that both of these hadiths speak of the same evidence and no more than that; they all speak of the qualities which indicate the same evidence. The first hadith speaks of the relation between the protection and revival of the religion and this victorious group, who will rise up with Allah's permission. The second hadith relates these affairs to the twelve Imams (‘a). It is because both of the hadiths speak of the qualities such as the religion's capability for revival, their being consultants regarding religious issues and realities, and naturally and as the result of such qualities, their facing every kind of enmity and deceit from their own friends. However, in both the hadiths, we read that these troubles will never affect them negatively, nor will they stop them from carrying out their responsibility, which is to protect and defend the religion of Islam.

The hadith of the victorious nation, as we studied before, clearly indicates a point which has already been shown in the hadith of the twelve leaders, which is that these twelve leaders will come one after another and this chain will remain till Judgment Day. It also tells us that their main responsibility is to defend the religion of Islam as the successors of the Prophet (s). No change will occur in their mission of defending the religion whether they are in power or deprived of such a position.

The Holy Prophet of Allah (s) has also clarified that the last of these twelve Imams (‘a) is none other than Imam Mahdi (‘a). In the hadith about the twelve leaders, too, the Prophet (s) has indicated this issue. This narration tells us that the Muslim nation will last until Jesus son of Mary (‘a) descends from the heavens, and will go to help their leader and will recite his prayer behind him. All Muslims agree that this is something only related to Imam Mahdi (‘a).

This holy hadith also insists that the twelve leaders will revolt with Allah's permission, and will carry out their responsibilities as the successors of the Prophet (s), completing his mission. They will all carry out their duties as administrators of the Prophet of Allah (s) regarding the protection of his religion till the Day of Judgment on continuous grounds. This has never matched the conditions of those who were in power as caliphs throughout the history of Islam. This is why people who ignored the signs mentioned in the above two hadiths have tried to find evidence for the two hadiths among those

who came into power as caliphs - by whatever means - but have failed to find a satisfactory answer and evidence and, therefore, have been puzzled. Since they came up with different opinions and proofs in this regard, they started altering the context of the hadiths, and this is clearly against the Prophet's (s) goal which is "the Ummah of the twelfth Imam ('a)."

How can one distinguish the real successor of the Prophet (s) from the one who is not his real successor, if we consider all the caliphs to be the Prophet's (s) successors and the evidence for the twelve Imams ('a) who will revive Allah's religion? How will we distinguish between Imam Ali ('a) and Mu'awiah and Imam Husayn ('a) and Yazid? How can the Prophet's (s) words about introducing the victorious nation that will always defend Allah's religion or his words regarding the twelve leaders be applied to people like Yazid bin Mu'awiah and Abd al-Malik bin Marwan, whose lifestyles and conduct clearly show that they were the most ignorant of people who had no share in the Prophet's (s) wisdom?

Here we will consider some of the evidence and proof of the twelve leaders as set forth by some Islamic scholars. Let us not forget that they have only focused on the list with each one coming after another to prove their continuous appearance, and they did not pay any attention to the qualities and conditions mentioned regarding the twelve leaders in the hadiths. Moreover, they have always neglected the point that the hadiths clearly indicate that this chain of twelve leaders will last till the Day of Judgment; their list lasts till the end of the Umayids.[1]

However, another group of scholars who have tried to consider other qualities of the twelve leaders while presenting their own evidence and proof have ignored another important point which is their continuously appearing one after another. They have ignored the caliphs between Mu'awiah and Umar bin Abdul Aziz, declaring him to be the fifth of the twelve leaders, and then they have left the

1 Although "Ibn Baaz" prefers this opinion on the note which he has written on the writing of "Sheikh Abdul Muhsin al-Ibad" about the Promised Mahdi ('a), this is still the weakest opinion which does not bear any relation with the context of the Holy hadiths. Refer to: "Al-Jami'ah al-Islamiah" magazine, first year, third edition, Thi Qa'dah, 1388 A.H.

caliphs coming after Umar bin Abdul Aziz and chose someone from the Umayids or 'Abbassids for the next leader. The caliphs they have chosen mostly qualify for the qualities mentioned in the hadiths. Still, they have failed to make their list arrive at twelve. Suyuti, who is among such scholars, writes after completing a list of ten caliphs: two other caliphs remain, one of them being the Promised Mahdi (‘a) and the next one being unknown to anyone![1]

However, if they considered this Holy hadith with an open mind based on reality and pondered on its clear meanings, they would never have alter the hadith, nor would they go astray; Imam Mahdi (‘a) is carrying out his responsibility of protecting the religion even when he is in occultation. This is enough to show that he is Allah's proof. This is what the previous hadiths, as well as the later hadiths, also indicate.

5. Hadiths of “no era will remain empty of a leader from Quraysh to free the people from dying in ignorance”

These are also among those narrations which have been recorded from Shi'ah and Sunnites sources. However, we will rely only on those narrations that have been recorded in authentic Sunnite traditional accounts. Bukhari and Muslim in their Sahihs, Ahmad in his Musnad and other Sunnite scholars in their books have narrated this hadith from the Holy Prophet of Allah (s): “The caliphate and ruling over the Muslims will always remain among the people of Quraysh, even if only two persons remain alive on the surface of the earth.”[2]

Al-Bukhari in his book: al-Tarikh, Ahmad in Musnad, Ibn Hubban in Sahih, Ibn Abi Shaybah in Musnad, Tayalisi in Musnad and Abu Ya'li, Tabarani, Haythami and other Sunnite scholars, with similar

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1 This opinion is more acceptable as compared with other false opinions. Refer to: Sheikh Mahmood Abu Riah, **Adwa Ala al-Sinat al-Muhammadiah** p. 212; Sheikh Lutfullah Safi, Muntakhab al-Athar. Footnote regarding analysis of these opinions; Sheikh Muhammad Hasan Muzaffar, **Dalail al-Sidq** 2:215 onwards; Hakim Sadr al-Din Shirazi, **Sharh usul al-Kafi** pp. 463-470 from manuscript.

2. **Sahih Bukhari** 9:78; **Sahih Muslim** 3:1452; **Musnad Ahmad** 2:93, 2:29 and another authority.

words, and with different authority have quoted these narrations from the Prophet of Allah (s) that, according to Tiyalisi's narration, the Prophet of Allah (s) said: "He who dies without his Imam has died an ignoramus' death, and whoever refrains from following his Imam, on the Day of Judgment will be raised without any proof."[1]

Explaining and interpreting this Holy hadith, Ibn Habban has written: "Abu Hatim has said: The Prophet's (s) saying: He has died an ignorant person's death' means that if someone dies and does not believe that there is an Imam for him who calls the people towards worshipping Allah, who protects Islam against difficulties and problems, and, on the contrary, such a person follows the people who lack the qualities which we mentioned in the above lines, it means that he has died the death of an ignorant person."[2]

The meaning of "Amr" in the Holy Book and Sunnah

If we look at the Arabic text of the hadith, we notice that the Holy hadith has clearly said that as long as there are humans on the face of the earth "al-Amr" will be for the people of Quraysh, and the land will never be empty from the people of Quraysh, who will always have "al-Amr." What we need to see is what the Prophet of Allah (s) meant by saying "al-Amr" in the above hadith. Can this word be explained by the meaning "taking the apparent government of the Muslims" or not?

The answer to this question is that historical reality has always rejected such interpretation. At least we are certain that from the time of recline of the 'Abbassid dynasty the Islamic government was no longer for the people of Quraysh. Hence it is impossible to explain the word "al-Amr" other than by its general meaning, which is a general caliphate, the Prophet's (s) succession in its general sense in dealing with religious affairs, protection of the religion, defending the religion and guiding and calling the people towards the religion. This is a post that means that whoever has it will certainly qualify for

1. **Tarikh Tabari** 6:445; **Musnad Ahmad** 3:466; **Sahih Ibn Habban** 7:49; **Musnad Tialisi** p. 1259-1913. **Musnad Ibn Abi Shaybah** 15:38; **Mu'jam Kabir Tabarani** 10:350; **Majm'a al-Zawaid** 2:252; taken from Abu Y'ali, Bizzar and Tabarani.
2. **Sahih Ibn Habban** 7:49.

leading the Muslims and taking charge of their government. Therefore the word "amr", used in this hadith is in the same meaning as that used in the holy verse of Surat Nisa:

﴿يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَطِيعُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُواْ ٱلرَّسُولَ وَأُوْلِى ٱلْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ﴾

"O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority".[1]

And if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day.

This is the same verse that indicates the infallibility of the evidence of "*Ulul al-amr*" (guardians), because they are also with the Prophet of Allah (s) in the issues like caliphate, guardianship and Allah's commands based upon the obligation of their obedience. Allah the Exalted the High has absolutely commanded people to obey them, and if Allah is commanding that some people must be obeyed these must be the people who never commit even the slightest mistake; they are the infallibles. This is what Fakhr Razi has also indicated in his interpretation.[2]

Hence there must be a person from Quraysh in our time as well, who is the successor of the Prophet (s) in the above sense, and Allah's religion is protected and continued by him. Also, there must be someone who is infallible and can shoulder the responsibility of protecting the religion of Islam and calling the people towards him as a successor of the Prophet of Allah (s), because according to this Holy hadith, no era will remain empty from the presence of the evidence and proof of the hadith. Since apparently we cannot find any leader and Imam (‘a) in Islamic society who answers this description, we are left with no other option but to accept that although such a person exists he is living in occultation. This is when we can prove what the Prophet of Allah (s) has said in the hadith. This is the same Shi'ah belief about Imam Mahdi (‘a) and his occultation.

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1. *Surat Nisa, 4:59.*
2. **Tafsir Kabir** 10:144; Refer to: the detailed discussion in **Tafsir Al-Mizan** by 'Allama Tabataba'i 4:378-401.

The narrations of the twelve caliphs are also included in this. These narrations have limited the number of successors of the Prophet of Allah (s) to "twelve" (12) till the Day of Judgment. We have already discussed and applied these narrations on the existence and the occultation of Imam Mahdi ('a). Hence we can say the hadith of "no era will be without a leader from Quraysh" can only support those narrations.

The same meaning can be deduced from the narrations regarding the obligation of understanding one's Imam ('a) and one's obligation to follow him. This narration explains: "He who does not understand his Imam ('a) or does not follow him will find there will be no Proof for him on the Day of Judgment." Therefore we have no option but to accept that there is certainly such a leader, and it is possible to recognize and follow him. Otherwise, Allah's words regarding those who have not been able to recognize him becomes meaningless.

Since this Holy hadith clearly commands us to follow such an Imam ('a), it also shows and confirms his infallibility. Also, the beginning part of the hadith shows that if someone dies without recognizing his Imam of time, he will die the death of an ignorant person; and that it is obligatory for everyone to follow and obey him, for he calls the people towards worshipping Allah the Almighty and Islam will always continue with his efforts. This is what Ibn Hibban also recorded, narrating from Abu Hatim about the clarity of the verse. This is why Abu Hatim has clarified that following anyone other than this Imam, and following those who do not have such qualities in them, can result in the death of an ignorant person. This is what we also understand from the first hadith. So all these hadiths indicate the same point.

After considering all the above hadiths, we can conclude our discussion by saying: "Certainly there will always be an Infallible Imam ('a) from Quraysh on the surface of the earth, who will continue with the religion of Islam and who will strengthen it. Since we do not find anyone in our society with such qualities and specialties, we must accept that he is living in occultation, from where he is dealing with his responsibilities. This will continue until the occultation ceases and then he will appear to establish a just

government based on religious values, the religion which he has and will defend.

Also it is impossible to believe in the absence and occultation of more than one leader or Imam (‘a) from among the twelve leaders who are the real successors of the Prophet of Allah (s), because history has proved that these hadiths can only be applied to the twelve Imams of the Household (‘a) with dates of birth, deaths or martyrdom of eleven of them proven and recorded in the pages of history and with Mahdi the Promised (‘a) remaining as the twelfth Imam to complete the number[1]. Therefore, in the light of the above-mentioned hadiths, we have to accept that the twelfth Imam (‘a) will live till the Day of Judgment. This is why “the earth will never remain without Allah's Proof” is the best belief, because as Sahih Bukhari, Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani has written: “As for Jesus (‘a) offering his prayer behind a man from this nation, although such a thing will happen towards the end of the world and at the beginning of Judgment Day, still the authentic hadiths indicate this fact: ‘The earth will never be without Allah's proof'. Allah knows best.”[2]

We must accept another point; these holy hadiths clearly indicate Imam Mahdi (‘a) and his occultation and confirm exactly the Shi'ah belief in this regard. However, it is the silence and attempts to hide the clear indications of hadiths that has created some ambiguities and problems in this regard and has compelled us to analyze the narrations in detail and present them as our reasons. Moreover, it is these efforts to alter them and apply them to false proofs and evidence which have caused great political disagreement in the history of Islam with its reflection on the world's doctrinal issues, too. This is why some experts in the field of hadiths have refrained from explaining

1. You can see that all the Islamic historians from different sects, who have written about the lifestyle of the twelve Imams (‘a), have also recorded the date of their martyrdoms. However, none of them has ever written the date of the martyrdom of Imam Mahdi son of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a). Rather they have only written the date of birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a). This is what we can observe in the books of even those historians, who do not believe that Mahdi the Promised (‘a) is the twelfth leader, whose appearance was predicted by the Prophet of Allah (s).
2. Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani, **Fath al-Baribi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari** 6:385.

the other narrations in this regard, which not only support these hadiths, but are also mentioned by the Prophet of Allah (s) as proofs and evidences of the twelve leaders. This is because the Umayid's and 'Abbassid's political interests did not allow them to spread such hadiths, so they stopped people from doing so. They did not even let the people publish such things. This is something everyone can understand merely by referring to the history of Islam.

SECTION TWO

Chapter One
Imam Mahdi's (‘a) growth and training

Chapter Two
The stages of Imam Mahdi's (‘a) life

Chapter Three
Imam Mahdi (‘a) under the protection of his father

CHAPTER ONE
THE GROWTH AND TRAINING OF IMAM MAHDI (AS)

1. The Day of the Birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a)

Imam Mahdi -may Allah bless him- was born in the city of Samarra, in his father's house, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), during the last hours of Friday night of the fifteenth of Sha'ban. He was born in the night, according to the noble narrations that are narrated from the messenger of Allah, where it is recommended to spend the night awake and to fast during the day.

Besides the fact that these narrations are narrated in the books of the school of holy household (‘a),[1] they are also narrated in the books of Sunnites; books like Sunan Ibn Majah, Sunan Tarmadhi and many more.[2]

According to the most well-known narratives, the birth of the Imam took place in the year 255/H.L. But there are other narratives that they have mentioned the year of birth of the Imam in 254 or 256/H.L. All of these narratives, however, unanimously determine the birthday on the fifteenth of Sha'ban. But because of the presence of some witnesses, the first date (255/H.L) has preference over the other dates, from among these witnesses, we can point to the registering of this date in the book of “Absence” compiled by the truthful Sheikh Fadl Ibn Shazan, which is from the oldest sources that has registered regarding the news of the birthday of the Imam, he (Ibn Shazan),

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1. Sheikh Saduq, **Thawab Al-'Amal** p. 101; Sheikh Tusi, **Mesbah Al-Mutahajjed** p. 762; Sayyid Ibn Tawus, **Iqbal Al-'Amal** p. 718.
2. R. to **Musnad** of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal 2:176; **Sunan** of Ibn Majah 1:445-444; **Faid Al-Ghadir** 4:459; **Sunan Of Tarmidhi** 3:116; **Kanz Al-'Ummal** 3:466 And many other books.

himself was present at the birth date of Imam Mahdi and he died[1] shortly before the death of the illustrious father of that Imam. Many of the narrations have agreed that the birthday of that Imam on the fifteenth of Sha'ban occurred on a Friday, but regarding the year of birth, their ideas differ and by reference to the comparative calendar, we find that the day of fifteenth of Sha'ban fell on a Friday only in the year 255/H.L.[2]

Of course the existence of such difference in the date of birth is a natural matter, because this difference is also in the date of birth and death of the eminent fathers and even the honorable grandfather of that Imam (the messenger of Allah), and this difference doesn't affect the birth dates of those honourable men. However, it mattered in the case of Imam Mahdi (‘a) because he was born in secret with the aim of protecting this blessed baby from the evil of the enemies. The reasons why this happened will be discussed in forth-coming sections.

2. The concurrent (tawatur) news of the birth of the Imam (‘a)

The subject of the birthday of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and its news is narrated briefly or completely, with authentic narrations by many scholars such as Abu Ja'far Tabari, Fadl ibn Shazan, Husayn ibn Hamdan, ‘Ali ibn Husayn Masudi, Sheikh Saduq, Sheikh Tusi, Sheikh Mufid, among others. Some of the Sunni scholars have narrated this news like: Noor al-Din Abd al-Rahman Jami Hanafi in Shawahid a-Nabowah, Allamah Muhammad Mu'ain Molawi Hendi in Wasileh al-Najat, Allamah Muhammad Khajeh Parsaye Bukhari in Fasl Al-Khatab and Hafiz Sulaiman Ghanduzi Hanafi in Yanabi'a al-

1. For obtaining these narrations, you can refer to the book **Al-Najm Al-Thaqib** compiled by Mirzaye Noori 2:146 onwards; Also R.to **Kafi** 1:329, **Kamal al-Din** p. 43.

2. By the comparative calendar we mean a calendar that compares the days of solar calendar with the days of lunar calendar, there are many of these calendars in book form or computer which can compare exactly every day of the days of the year of the lunar of Hegirae with the solar calendar of Hegirae or solar calendar of Christians. We have used in our research the comparative calendar which is published by the university of Tehran, and this calendar includes the first day of the first year of the emigration of the great messenger (s) till the last day of the fifteenth century of Hegirae.

Mawadah. The news of the birthday of the Imam is narrated by at least 130 scholars of the many different Islamic sects, who among them were ten historians and among these ten, six of them were present during the short-term occultation or birthday of Imam Mahdi (‘a), and the rest of them were in a connected chain from the different Islamic centuries till this day. These statistics include only part of the Islamic authorities and sources and not all of them, and among this group are a large number of famous historians, for example: Ibn Khaliqan, Ibn Athir, Abulfida, Thahbi, Ibn Tolon Dimashqi, Sibte ibn Juzi, Mohi al-Din Arabi, Kharazmi, Beihaqi, Safdi, Yafei, Gharmani, Ibn Hajar Heithami and many of other experts.

The births of the many famous men of the history of Islam have not been registered and spoken about in the history books with such extent.[1]

3. The conditions of the birth

From the narrations about the quality of the birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a), we gather that his honourable father, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), took actions in order for his birth to take place in secret. It is narrated in the following narrations: Imam Hasan 'Askari wanted his honourable aunt, lady Hakimah, the daughter of Imam Jawad (‘a) to stay at his home on the fifteenth night of Sha'ban, and it was said to her that on that night a baby boy would be born from that Imam's lineage who would be the proof of Allah on the earth. Lady Hakimah asked the Imam about the mother of that child, and the Imam replied: he will be born from Narjes. So lady Hakimah went to Narjes and examined her, but she didn't find any signs of pregnancy in her. She returned to the Imam (‘a) and informed him of the matter. The Imam smiled and told lady Hakimah that Imam Mahdi's mother was pre-destined to take on a similar role to that of the mother of Moses (‘a) whose pregnancy was kept concealed until it was the time of her childbirth. Because the Pharaoh was scared of the arrival of Moses, whose birth had been predicted by the Jewish priests, he was pursuing the children of Bani-Israel, killing their sons and leaving their daughters alive, and history

1. For obtaining the account of the ideas and sayings of the scientists of Islam in this ground, you can refer to the statistics of Sayyid Amir 'Amidi in his book defense of **Kafi** 1:352-592.

was repeating itself during the time of the arrival of Imam Mahdi (‘a). The 'Abbassi government was on red alert for any news of the birth of the Imam so they could kill him as he came into the world.

From these narrations we find that the noble birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a) occurred a few moments before dawn which assisted the efforts of the people who knew of the birth to keep it secret because at such a time government spies were in deep sleep. It is narrated that at the time of birth, no one was present except lady Hakimah and even she was not acquainted with the exact time of delivering.[1]

But there is a narration which Sheikh Tusi has quoted in the book of “Absence,” it specified in this narration that, on that night, an old midwife, who was one of the neighbors of Imam Hasan 'Askari, was summoned to help lady Hakimah during the birth of the baby, and she was told not to tell anyone about this event.[2]

4. Anticipatory news about the mysterious birth

Many noble narrations have anticipated that the birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a), who is the son of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), take place in secret, and these narrations have attributed this hidden matter to the divine decree of Allah. Some of these narrations have compared the secretive birth of the Imam with the birth of Moses (‘a) and some of them have compared it to the birth of Abraham (‘a). They mentioned that the reason why it was kept a secret was to protect the Imam in order for him to carry out the divine mission. Now we shall mention a few of these narrations:

Sheikh Saduq in Kamal al-Din, and Khazzaz in Kifayah al-Athar narrates from Imam Hasan 'Askari: “Do you know that each of the pure Imams has accepted the responsibility of an allegiance with a rebel oppressor of his time except Qaim, who Jesus performs prayer

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1. R. to the narrations that Sayyid Bahrami has accumulated in relation to the matter of the birth of that Imam from the authentic sources in his book **Tabserah al-Wali** p. 6 onwards; also the summarization of Mirzaye Noori in the book **Al-Najm al-Thaqib** 2:153 onwards; and the book **Absence** from sheikh Tusi, the chapter that is for the proving of the birth of **Sahib al-Zaman (‘a)** p. 74 onwards.
2. Sheikh Tusi, **Absence** p. 144.

behind?! And do you know that Allah made his birth a secret and will send him into hiding in order that when he rises and returns, he will not be obliged to swear allegiance to anyone. He is the ninth son of the children of my brother, Husayn, the son of the master of the ladies of the world. Allah will prolong his life during his absence, and after that, he will bring him back and he will appear with unbeatable power…[1]

In a narration that Sheikh Saduq has narrated, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) said: when our Qaim appears, he is not obliged with the responsibility to swear allegiance to anyone. This is the reason his birth should take place in secret and he is not seen.[2]

He (Sheikh Saduq) has narrated from Imam Sajjad (‘a): “There are qualities in our Qaim similar to the qualities of the prophets… and the quality that he has inherited from Abraham is the fact that his birth is hidden…[3]

And it is narrated from Imam Husayn (‘a): “There is a quality in the ninth child of my descendants, which resembles the qualities of Joseph and Moses ibn Emran. He is the Qaim of the holy household, and Allah will amend his affair in one night.[4]

Kulayni has narrated in Kafi from Imam Baqir (‘a): “See that each one of the leaders whose time of birth was made secret from the people, will be your leader, indeed anyone of the household who becomes known and his fame is spread across the land, will leave this world as a result of the rancor and jealousy of enemies.”[5]

There are many narrations that denote this sense, and many of them have proofs and an explicitness in expression, and they have announced openly the secret birth of Imam Mahdi before its occurrence, and this is a moral and clear guide for their legitimacy even if some of them have a weak background or if there is an unknown narrator in the chain; because these narrations have been informed about incidents that had not yet happened so, their

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 315, **Kifayah al-Athar** p. 317.
2. **Kamal al-Din** p. 303.
3. **Kamal al-Din** pp. 321-322.
4. **Kamal al-Din** p. 316.
5. **Kafi** 1:276.

occurrence have verified the correctness of these narrations and the issuance of these narrations is not possible except with the help of Allah who is the only One who is aware of the unknown, and this proves that these narrations have been issued only from the messenger of Allah (s).

5. The hidden birth, the sign of the promised Mahdi (‘a)

In these narrations, the hidden birth is one of the prominent signs of distinguishing the identity of the promised Mahdi, the Qaim of the children of the holy Fatimah (‘a); “The one who the prophetic narrations have had glad tidings of his coming, and this is one of the most important aims of this matter; because informing Muslims of one of the signs of the arrival of the promised Mahdi, causes them to discover the falseness of the claim of those who claim for Mahdawiat. The history of Islam has observed many false pretenders, but this sign didn't conform to any of them; that is to say, by the witness of history, the birth of each one of these pretenders was not in occultation.”[1]

The noble narrations that we have mentioned so far have explained the reasons for hiding the birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and they are the same reasons that led the birth of Moses (‘a) to occur in secret. The reasons were to protect Moses (‘a) during his childhood from the oppression of the oppressors and their attempts to kill him, so this protected the message of Allah and allowed it to be delivered to the servants and Moses (‘a) was able to perform his divine role to save Bani Israel from the claws of the Pharaoh, sheltering them from a polytheistic religion and confronting the great rebel, Pharaoh. This was true about Imam Mahdi too; he can save human beings, can eradicate oppression and injustice from the surface of the earth, can establish justice, and he can give preference to the religion of Islam over all other religions. This matter was not hidden from the oppressive leaders of the time, because, they were aware of his arrival through the registered narrations. The Pharaoh of Egypt was aware of the arrival of the saviour of Bani Israel, who was Moses (‘a), and who

1. Doctor Muhammad Mahdikhan the founder of the magazine of Wisdom in Cairo, has mentioned the descriptions of these false pretenders in his book **Bab Al-Abwab** which a part of this book has allocated to the research about the movements of the pretenders of Mahdawiat.

would rise among them. For this reason, he tried to kill all the baby boys of Bani Israel to prevent the appearance of Moses. The state of Bani 'Abbas was also like this. They knew that the promised Mahdi (‘a) would be from the children of Sayyida Fatimah, and that he would be the twelfth leader from the holy household. The prophetic narrations that specify this matter have been scattered among Muslims, and the scholars of the narrations have written them in their books many years before the birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a). Also, Bani 'Abbas knew that Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) was the eleventh leader of the prophetic household (‘a), so it was natural for them to try to end their anxiety and cut off the lineage of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a).

It is clear without saying that even the probability of legitimacy of these narrations was sufficient to put the motive in the hands of the 'Abbassi rulers for killing that particular Imam, and it was while they not only considered this matter probable, but they were also sure of the matter and they knew that there was no chain among Muslims except this chain of twelve leaders, whose mentioned qualities in the narrations was applicable only to them. We have proved this matter in detail during the previous discussions.

Under this historical phenomenon, it is possible for us to understand the secret of the short life of three (ninth, tenth and eleventh) Imams who are the forefathers of Imam Mahdi (‘a). The honourable father of Imam Mahdi, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), passed this world at the age 28,[1] his grandfather, Imam Hadi at the age 40,[2] and his great grandfather, Imam Jawad passed away at the very young age 25,[3] so this phenomenon needs research and investigation and this matter is sufficient for discovering the fast actions of the 'Abbassids for intending to cut off this lineage in order to prevent the arrival of the promised Mahdi,[4] even if history has not registered the acts of the

1. Ibn Sabbagh Maliki, **Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah** p. 288.
2. Masudi, **Mouroj al-Thahab** 4:169.
3. Ibn Sabbagh Maliki, **Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah** p. 276.
4. The extent of these attempts also reached the house of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a). The ‘Abbasi government appointed female spies for observing whatever was happening in the house of the Imam in order that when Imam Mahdi was born they would kill him and these attempts continued to the extent that they didn't even want Imam Mahdi to come to the world. So, we

14'Abbassi as responsible for the assassination and killing of these leaders, many of these actions are registered in history. The historians have even registered that the 'Abbassi imprisoned Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) and tried to kill him many times; similar to their previous actions with his great fathers.[1]

Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) has expressed this burning fight and enmity of 'Abbassi towards the holy household (‘a) in a narration by Sheikh Fadl Ibn Shazan who narrated:

Fadl Ibn Shazan says: Abdullah ibn Husayn, the writer Sa'd quoted: Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) has said: the Umayads and Bani 'Abbas are trying to kill us because of two reasons: one of the reasons is that they knew that they have no right of caliphate, so they feared that we will claim caliphate and that the right reaches the rightful one. The second reason is that they were informed through hearsay, that the eradicating of the government of oppressors and despotic persons would take place through the Qaim of the holy household. They were sure that they were the oppressive and despotic ones, so they tried to kill the holy household of the messenger of Allah (s), and through their own greed they tried to stop the birth of the Qaim, and if he was born they wanted to kill him and cut off the line of descendants of the great messenger (s). But Allah didn't want to reveal the location of the Imam to any of the oppressive caliphs; he willed to complete his light, even if it becomes unpleasant to the pagans.[2]

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observe that Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) didn't marry in the formal, usual and common way of that time.

1. R.to Sheikh Tusi, **Hayat Al-Imam Al-'Askari (‘a)** p. 421-424.

2. **Sheikh Hurr 'Ameli** 3:570, Sheikh Lotfollah Safi, **Montakhab Al-Athar** p. 359/C 34/N 4 narrated from: Khatoon 'Abadi, Kashf al-Haq and in continuation to it there is much news according to the contents of the narrations that we mentioned.

CHAPTER TWO
STAGES OF THE LIFE OF IMAM MAHDI (AS)

The life of every pure Imam is generally divided into two basic parts:

The First part*:* the life of the Imam before taking the reign of the matters of Imamate and leadership.

The Second part*:* the life of that Imam after taking the reign of the matters of Imamate and leadership.

We can divide each of these parts into several stages. Therefore, the life of Imam Mahdi (‘a) divides into four specified stages:

First stage*:* the life of the Imam under the protective shadow of his great father; that is to say, from his birth in the year 255/L.H to the day of martyrdom of his father, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) in the year 260/L.H, and this stage lasted for 5 years.

Second stage*:* the life of that Imam from the time of the martyrdom of his father, from the year 260/L.H to the end of the short-term absence in the year 329/L.H, and this time is 70 years.

Third stage*:* the life of the Imam in the long-term absence which started from the death of the fourth deputy of that Imam in the year 329/H.L and will be continued till the day of his reappearance in the arena of social and political incidents of the world.

Fourth stage*:* the life of the Imam in the time of his reappearance, which will start after the end of his long-term absence that is the time for the great conquering of the Mahdawi government that the Muslim people are awaiting and the texts of the book and Sunnah have informed all of mankind about his return.

Each of these stages includes a set of qualities, which by the will Allah, we will talk about in future chapters.

CHAPTER THREE
IMAM MAHDI (AS), UNDER THE PROTECTION OF HIS FATHER

1. The role of Imam 'Askari (‘a) in proclaiming the birth of Imam Mahdi

In such dreadful and hard conditions, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) was confronted with a responsibility which was of a high level of importance and was very sensitive; from one side, the Imam should completely hide the matter of the birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a) from the eyes of the 'Abbassi government and should not let them know of his presence, his birth and the place where he was living; all these precautions were put in place in order to protect this child from the attempts of the 'Abbassi government to kill him; so, we observe that when Imam Mahdi (‘a) was born, Imam 'Askari (‘a) emphasizes on keeping his birth a secret and gives severe orders for each of the family and, in particular the Shi'ahs, to keep this news a secret, for example, the Imam said to Ahmad ibn Ishaq: We have a child, you should keep this news hidden from all the people.[1]

But from the other side, besides this concealment, in those dreadful conditions and surprising and continuous inspections of the government of 'Abbassi the Imam should prove the news of the birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a) among the Shi'ahs in a manner that, after the death of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), there would be no doubt among the Shi'ahs about the existence and Imamate of Imam Mahdi (‘a). So it was necessary for that Imam to find witnesses for this matter and inform them of the fact so that later he could narrate his witness to others and that the historians would register these witnesses for the future generations. Therefore, the Imam informed some of his

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 434.

particular Shi'ahs of the birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a)[1] and he showed the child to them after three days passed from the birth of the child;[2] also, a few years after the birth of the Imam, he showed him to forty of his elders and pure companions while Imam Mahdi (‘a) was a young child and proclaimed that this son would be the Imam after him.[3] From time to time, the Imam showed Imam Mahdi (‘a) in secret to some of his companions and Imam Mahdi (‘a) showed magnanimities and made them certain about his Imamate.[4] Due to the necessity of the severe protection of the life of this holy child from the crimes of the 'Abbassi government, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) performed other actions in order to register the birth of his successor in the history books and according to the narration of Sheikh Mufid (may Allah bless him), the birth of Imam Mahdi (‘a) has been registered in history in a strong form.[5]

Another aspect that Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) was facing was the responsibility of preparing people for the absence of his child, Mahdi (‘a), and accustoming the pious men to have indirect contact with the absent Imam, and that Imam performed these affairs by hierarchical actions and programs; actions like: informing people of the imminent absence of Imam Mahdi and ordering them to refer to ‘Uthman ibn Sa'id who was his deputy. After showing Imam Mahdi (‘a) when he was a child to some of his companions, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), said to them:

He is your Imam after me and he is my successor, follow him and do not lead yourselves to disunion and sectarianism, because your deen will be annihilated. Be aware that from this time till the certain time

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1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 431; R.B Muhammad Ibn Fid Kashani, **Maiden Al-Hekmah Fi Makatib Al-Aimmah** 2:275.
2. **Kamal al-Din** p. 431.
3. Sheikh Tusi, **Ghaibat** p. 217; Sheikh Hurr 'Ameli, **Ithbat Al-Hudat** p. 415; Hafiz Suleiman Hanafi, **Yanabi'a al-Mawadah** p. 460.
4. For obtaining these matters you can refer to the book Tabserah Al-Wali compiled by Sayyid Bahrani and chapters from the books of Ghaibat explained by those who came to seek the honour of Imam Mahdi in the life period of Imam Hasan'Askari.
5. Al-Fusul Al-Eshrah Fi Al-Ghibah which has printed in the book **Iddah Rasail** Sheikh Mufid p. 353.

that will be passed, you won't see him; therefore, accept whatever Othman says and submit to his orders, accept his words because he is the successor of your Imam and the matter of Imamate is in his hands.[1]

One of the other actions of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) in this arena was the emphasis of the Imam on retirement and keeping aloof from people and the indirect contact with the pious men in order to prepare them for the stage of absence. Therefore, the Imam spoke with his special Shi'ahs in secret except when he was riding to the caliphate's seat, so his action and the action of his honorable father, Imam Hadi (‘a) before him was a preface to the absence of the holy Owner Of This Time (‘a) in order that the Shi'ahs become familiar with this matter, the absence of Imam be not a strange thing for them and the concealment of the Imam from the Shi'ahs becomes a usual matter for the Shi'ahs[2], one of the other actions which was performed in this respect was the stabilization of the system of the representatives of the Imam and confirming the traditional books in which the companions of the pure Imams had been accumulating their narrations from the Imams and the holy prophet[3] in order that pious men refer to them in the time of the absence.[4]

2. The presence of Imam Mahdi (‘a) at the death of his father

According to what Sheikh Saduq in Kamal al-Din and Sheikh Tusi in Ghaybat it has been narrated: The holy Mahdi (May Allah not delay his appearance) has attended at the day of his father's death. But the narration of Sheikh Tusi is more detailed than the narration of Sheikh Saduq because Sheikh Saduq has pointed to the presence of that Imam at that day but he has not stipulated it: Sheikh Saduq narrates

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1. **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 217.
2. **Mas'udi, Ithbat al-Wasiah** p. 262.
3. R.to **Rijal Kashi** p. 481, 451; **Rijal Ibn Dawood** p. 272-273; **Wasail al-Shi'ah** 18:72; Sayyid ibn Tawus, **Falah al-sail** p. 183
4. For being aware of the role of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) in this arena, you can refer to the book of the history of **the short-term absence compiled** by Shahid Sayyid Muhammad Sadr (May he rest in peace) p. 269 afterwards, also the book **Hayat al-Imam al-'Askari (‘a)** compiled by Sheikh Tabrasi pp. 313-326.

from Muhammad ibn Husayn ibn 'Abad: Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) passed on at the time of the morning prayer on Friday, the eight day of Rabi' al-awal in the year 260/H.L. This Imam wrote many letters personally during the same night and sent them to Medina. At the time of the death of that Imam, no one was beside him but a bondswoman by the name of Siqal, a servant by the name of 'Aqid and the one who only Allah knows…[1]

But Sheikh Tusi has mentioned this narration with more detail when he says:

Ismail ibn ‘Ali says: I entered on Abu Muhammad Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) during the time he was experiencing the illness that led to his death. I was beside him. He said to his servant, 'Aqid, who was a dark-skinned man from Sudan, and had been the servant of his father Imam Hadi (‘a) and had grown up with Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a): O, 'Aqid, boil frankincense for me in some water. He did so and then the bondswoman of that Imam, Siqal (the mother of Saheb al-Zaman), fetched it for the Imam. When the cup was put in the hands of Imam and he wanted to drink it, his hands began trembling until the edge of cup touched the teeth of the Imam; Imam gave up drinking and said to 'Aqid: *Enter the room, you will see a boy in prostration. Bring him to me.*

Abu Sahl says: 'Aqid said: I entered the room while I was astonished, suddenly I saw a boy in prostration and he had his forefinger raised to the sky. I saluted him and he finished his prayer immediately. Then I said to the Imam: My lord has ordered that you go to him. Meanwhile, the mother of that boy, Siqal entered, holding his hand and carrying him to his father Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a).

Abu Sahl says: When the child stood in front of the Imam, he saluted him while his face was glowing, his hair was curly and his teeth were spaced from each other. When Imam 'Askari saw him, he began to cry and said: *O master of your family, give me this water to drink, because I am leaving this world to be with Allah.* The child held the cup in his hand, then his lips moved and he gave the drink to the Imam. When Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) drank it, he said: prepare me for the morning prayer. They spread a towel on his lap and the child

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 474.

performed for him the ablutions, bit-by-bit he washed his forehead and his toes.

Then Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) said to him: My son, I welcome you to the title of: The Owner Of The Time; you are Mahdi, you are the proof of Allah on the earth, you are my son and my child and I gave you life, you are Muhammad, the son of Hasan, the son of ‘Ali, the son of Muhammad, the son of ‘Ali, the son of Musa, the son of Ja'far, the son of Muhammad, the son of ‘Ali, the son of Husayn, the son of ‘Ali ibn Abi-Talib; the messenger of Allah (s) has given you life and you are the last of the pure leaders. The prophet of Allah (s) has given the glad tidings for your coming and he has determined your name and title. My father has promised me of your arrival through the narration of your pure ancestors. I wish Allah blesses the holy household because he is our Lord, he is praiseworthy and he is the owner of authority. At this time Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) said: Yes to the invitation of Allah.[1]

1. **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 165.

SECTION THREE

Chapter One
The short-term occultation of Imam Mahdi (‘a)

Chapter Two
The reasons of the short-term occultation of Imam Mahdi (‘a)

Chapter Three
The actions of Imam Mahdi (‘a) in short-term occultation

CHAPTER ONE
THE SHORT-TERM OCCULTATION OF IMAM MAHDI (AS)

1. The acceptance of the responsibility of Imamate by Imam Mahdi (‘a) in childhood

Imam Mahdi (‘a) undertook the responsibility of Imamate at the age of 5 or 6. He was younger than all the Imams when he undertook the responsibility of Imamate and before this matter, the noble traditions have announced this fact.[1]

And this matter is not strange and unprecedented in the history of prophets, messengers and the leaders of the holy household. Because according to the text of the holy Qur'an, some of the prophets before Imam Mahdi (‘a) had this quality like Jesus (‘a) and the Saint John (‘a), also, two of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt have had this quality before him, like Imam Hadi (‘a) who undertook Imamate at the age of 8 and Imam Jawad who undertook Imamate at the age of 7 or 9.

Imam Jawad (‘a) took part in two general exams: the first exam took place after undertaking the direct responsibility of Imamate, in the presence of the elders of the religion of the holy household (‘a) and the great scholars who were from the companions of his father, Imam Rida (‘a). The second exam took place in the assembly of Ma'moon, in the presence of the great scientists of that time and in the presence

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1. For example we can point to the tradition of Imam Baqir (‘a) who said: in my opinion, the owner of the matter of absence is our youngest from the view point of age and our most unknown from the view point of personality… **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 184, in this regard you can refer to the expressions of Sheikh Mufid (may he rest in peace) in the book of **al-Fusul al-Mukhtarah from al-'Uyun walmahasen** p. 256 and also the book of discussion about Mahdi compiled by the martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr (may he rest in peace) which has a detailed discussion about this phenomenon in the life of Imams (‘a).

of the greatest leaders of 'Abbassi who all tried to decrease the value and rank of the household (‘a). Imam Jawad passed both of the exams with victorious brilliance and for this reason, the elders of his father's companions and the great Muslim scholars confessed and acknowledged the scientific Imamate and leadership of that Imam and his full knowledge about the sciences of religion of his great ancestor the holy Muhammad (s).[1]

The most important result of this matter is proving the matter of Imamate of the twelve Imams. Because, Imamate of these honorable men is a divine rank which the exalted Allah grants to whomever he wants. Therefore, the young age has no effect on the merit of divine diffusion on a person and we observe that all of the scholars of Islam who have written the biography of Imam Mahdi (s), have assumed the undertaking of his responsibility of Imamate at the age of 5 to be a natural matter in the method of the leaders of this family and, as you see, a great scholar like Ibn Hajar Heithami Makki Shafeii writes in the biography of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a): He didn't leave any successor after himself but a son in the name of Abu al-Qasem Muhammad. He was 5 years old when his father died; but Allah granted him wisdom at this very young age…[2]

Also Sheikh Abd al-Rahman Hanafi, the author of the book Merat al-Israr, writes in the biography of Imam Mahdi (‘a): he was 5 years old when his father died. He came to the throne of Imamate after his father and the parable of him is like the parable of Saint John, the son of Zacharias; because the exalted Allah granted him wisdom and magnanimity in childhood. Also his parable is like that of Jesus, the son of Maryam; because the exalted Allah has granted him prophet hood during childhood. Mahdi is such that the exalted Allah has granted him Imamate in his childhood and whatever miracles he performed are so many that no book is large enough to capacitate all his achievements and wonders.[3]

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1. These exams have been registered in detailed in the encyclopaedia of **Bihar al-Anwar** 50:99 and other books.
2. **Al-Sawa'aq al-Muhriqah** p. 124.
3. **Merat al-Asrar** p. 31.

Here we observe that Sheikh Jami Hanafihas relied on the life of the past prophets. This means that when the Imam is confirmed and supported by Allah being young or an adult has no effect on his Imamate and therefore the Imamate of children won't have any dimension.

And this matter has proved that Imam Mahdi (‘a) has had such divine support. This matter comes up from the few incidents that are narrated in the historical and traditional books, which mention the magnanimities of that Imam, the magnanimities that habitually don't belong to anyone but an Imam. Some of these magnanimities have occurred in the life period of his father and some of them in the time of his own Imamate.[1]

2. Performing prayer on his father and proclaiming the existence

One of the first commissions that Imam al-Zaman embarked on soon after taking up the reins of Imamate, was saying the funeral prayer over the body of his honorable father, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) in the house, before carrying him out for the formal prayer according to the rules of the 'Abbassi government.[2] In spite of the fact that performing this prayer had dangers for the Imam after the dissemination this news, from the viewpoint of proving his Imamate, it was an important affair.

Sheikh Tusi narrates from Ahmad ibn Abdullah Hashemi is a son of Abbas, who said: On the day that Imam Abu Muhammad bid farewell to the world, I attended the Imam's house in Samarra. The body of the Imam had been carried out of the house and had been placed in the courtyard. We were thirty nine men who were waiting; meanwhile a boy who was in the first decade of his life entered upon us barefooted

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1. Like speaking of that Imam on his day of birth and in the cradle, **Kamal al-Din** pp. 433, 441 and…, and like expressing the philosophical and scientific subjects in child hood, **Ghaibat Sheikh Tusi** pp. 148 and…

2. From here we can understand that the first prayer has performed in the presence of the well-known companions of Imam and his family and relatives, and the formal prayer has performed in the presence of the deputies of the government of 'Abbasi, the well-known people of the town and the public, for more detail in this ground you can refer to the book of **Bihar al-Anwar** 50:378.

and while he had a cloak on his shoulder he covered his face with it. When he came to us, all of us stood up because of his majesty despite not knowing who he was. He came forward, and people rose and lined up behind him. He said the prayer for the deceased and then entered a room other than the one that he had come from.[1]

Also Sheikh Saduq narrates this incident with more subtle detail from Abu al-Adyan Basari who was one of the reliable men of Imam Hasan 'Askari:

"I was serving Imam Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Musa ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Husayn ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) and I sent his letters to various cities. The last time that he (Imam) was bedbound because of sickness and he suffered martyrdom on its account, I had come to seek his honour (may the peace of Allah be upon him) in his presence. The Imam wrote letters and gave them to me and said: *take these letters to Madayen. You will be travelling for fourteen days and you will return to Samarra on the fifteenth day, and on the same day, you will hear the cry of mourning from my house and you will find me on the place of ceremonial washing.*

Abu al-Adyan says: I said to the Imam: my lord! When such an incident takes place, who will be your successor? Imam replied: *The one who will request from you the answer of letters, he will be the same man who will rise after me for the place of Imamate.*

I said to that Imam: Give me more signs.

Imam said: *The one who knows what is in the scrip and informs you of its contents, he is the one who will rise after me for the matter of Imamate.* After these questions, the Imam prevented me to ask him what is in the scrip, so I took the letters and carried them to Madayen, then I received their replies and entered the city of Samarra on the fifteenth day and, as Imam had informed me, I heard groaning and mourning coming from his house. When I entered the house, people were performing ceremonial washing of the pure body of the Imam. I observed that the great liar, Ja'far, the Imam's and the son of Imam Hadi ('a) was standing by the door of the house, the Shi'ahs were all

1.**Ghaibat Sheikh Tusi** p. 155.

around of him, they were offering condolences to him and were congratulating him on his Imamate. I said to myself: If this man is Imam, the Imamate has been destroyed, because I knew him, I knew that he was accustomed to drinking wine, he was a gambler in the palace and he played the guitar. I came towards him, offered him condolences and congratulate to him on his Imamate. But he didn't ask me anything! Then 'Aqid went out and said to him: My lord! Your brother's body has been prepared for the prayer, rise and say the funeral prayer for him.

Ja'far ibn 'Ali along with the Shi'ahs around him that were in front of them were moving Samman and Hasan ibn 'Ali known as Salameh, who was killed by Mo'tasam, entered the house. When we entered, we saw that Imam Hasan 'Askari (peace be upon him) was wrapped in the shroud and was in his coffin. Ja'far ibn 'Ali went forward to offer prayer for his brother. When he wanted to say the Takbir of the prayer, suddenly a tawny child with curly hair and spaced teeth came and took the cloak of Ja'far ibn 'Ali and said: O uncle, please stand at the back, it is better that I perform the prayer for my father.

Ja'far, whose face was overcome with anger, turned pale and stepped behind the child and the child took his place at the front and led the prayer for Imam Hasan 'Askari ('a). Then, Imam was buried beside the grave of his honorable father. After that, the child said to me: O Basri, give me the reply of the letters which are with you. I gave him the reply of the letters and said to myself: These two signs are from the signs of his Imamate and now the scrip shall remain. Then I went out and went to Ja'far ibn 'Ali who was complaining. I saw that Hajez Washa was saying to him: My lord, tell me who this child is. I will adduce reason against him. Ja'far said: I swear by Allah, I have never seen him before and I do not know him.

We were sitting, when a group from Qom entered and asked about Imam Hasan 'Askari ('a) and they were told about the death of the Imam, so, they asked: now, to whom should we offer condolences? People pointed to Ja'far ibn Ali. They went to Ja'far ibn Ali, offered him condolences and congratulated him and said: There are letters and there is a sum of money, you should say who has written these letters and what the amount of the money is. Ja'far rose, shook the dust from his clothes and said: "You want to know from us what is

hidden?!" The narrator says: Meanwhile, a servant came out and said: there are such and such letters with you, and also there is scrip before you with thousands dinars which the print of ten dinars on it has faded. They gave the letters and properties to the servant and said to him: the one who has sent you to take over these letters and this money is for the Imam.

After this incident, Ja'far ibn 'Ali entered to Mu'tamed, the 'Abbassid caliph and repeated this matter to him. Mu'tamed sent his officials and they arrested the bondswoman of Imam Hasan 'Askari ('a), Siqal, the mother of Imam al-Zaman ('a) and requested the child from her. She denied having such child and for concealing the state of the child, claimed that she is pregnant. They left her to judge, Ibn Abi Al-Shawareb for confessing, but suddenly, the matter of the death of Obaydollah ibn Khaqan occurred and all at once a person by the name of Saheb al-Zanj rebelled in Basra and because of these matters, the government neglected the matter of the bondswoman, so praise to Allah, she was saved from their clutches…[1]

3. The aims of Imam al-Zaman ('a) for performing prayer for the body of father

Performing prayer by Imam al-Zaman for the body of his honorable father verified two important matters which was necessary; because after the martyrdom of the eleventh Imam, all of the people were trying to know the identity of the twelfth Imam and were waiting. We know that the birth of Imam Mahdi ('a) took place in full concealment in order that the 'Abbassi government which was lying in wait to kill this child who is the peacemaker and expected imam of the society, so that he would become unsuccessful in attaining his inauspicious aim. For this reason, these special conditions necessitated that everybody should be waiting to see who would perform the prayer for the body of the eleventh Imam so that they could take this matter as an indication to discover the identity of the successor of the eleventh Imam. And at the same time, this condition was a very suitable opportunity for informing those who attended the house of Imam 'Askari ('a) on that day and most of them were among the special companions and representatives of Imam 'Askari ('a);

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 475-476.

being aware of the fact that Imam al-Zaman (‘a) was alive, that he was the true successor of his father, and the powerful hand of Allah had kept him safe from the criminal activities of the 'Abbassi government. And we especially know that immediately after receiving the news of the death of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), the caliph of the time, Mu'tamed 'Abbassi dispatched his soldiers to inspect the house of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) room by room in order to find out if he had a son or not, and the soldiers took women officials with them in order to be able to examine the bondswomen to see if there were any pregnant with a child that may be the twelfth Imam, and all of this took place before washing of the pure body of the Imam and wrapping him in a funeral sheet.[1]

Therefore, Imam al-Zaman performing the prayer for his honorable father meant that the people who were in the Imam's house on that day were witnesses; and according to the narration of Hashemi, they were 40 people that knew that Imam Mahdi (‘a) has escaped the attack of the 'Abbassi government, the attack that surprised the bereaved and afflicted family of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) by leaving them without their Imam, and this attack was to some extent surprising since some of the Shi'ahs imagined that the family of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) had not anticipated the probability of such an attack and were not ready for it.

The importance of the Imam performing prayer over the body of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) clarifies the fact that this son is the son of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) and therefore, for performing the prayer for the Imam, he is more deserving than others. And, as the narration of Abo-ladyan stipulates the Imam addressed his uncle and said: O uncle! I am more deserving to say the prayer for my father than you.

The second achievement of the action of Imam Mahdi (‘a) was preventing his uncle Ja'far, known as the big liar, from exploiting this situation for his own interests. Because Ja'far performing the prayer for Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) could have been used as a bargaining chip for him in people's minds, confirming his erroneous claims to being his brother's successor. The importance and necessity of this

1. The account and explain of this matter has written in **Kamal al-Din** pp. 43, 473.

action becomes clear from Ja'far's previous attempts which he performed with the encouragement of the 'Abbassi government with the aim of convincing people that he was the successor of his brother, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a).[1] According to the content of the last narration, his persistence in this matter reached the extent that he started vilifying his nephew, Imam Mahdi (‘a), before the caliph of 'Abbassi by asking the 'Abbassi court's help; he immediately reported to the caliph of the time, Mu’tamed 'Abbassi, the attendance of Imam Mahdi (‘a) performing his father's funeral prayer hoping that they arrest him.

It is clear that such arrogant activities had a hugely negative effect misleading and diverting people from the true Imam, especially as Imam Mahdi, with the exception of a few special companions of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) had been hidden from everyone since the occasion of his birth. Therefore, Imam Mahdi (‘a) had to confront this problem and not allow his uncle, Ja'far, to benefit from this sensitive situation to indulge in misleading activities, and in spite of the fact that there were many risks, he (Imam Mahdi) should deliver his ultimatum to all the people.

4. The two occultations of Imam Mahdi (‘a)

Imam Mahdi, may Allah hasten his return, has had two absences which are known as the short-term and long-term absence and the numerous narrations which are narrated from the great messenger (s) and the infallible Imams (‘a), have mentioned these two absences which we will soon indicate. Furthermore, as we observed, some of the texts of the divine books of the past have also pointed to them.

The short-term absence of Imam Mahdi (‘a) began from the year 260 of Hijri, that is to say, from the time of the death of his father, Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), and therefore, from this time until the death of the last of the four deputies (his special deputies and representatives), Sheikh ‘Ali ibn Muhammad Samari, on the 15th of Sha'ban of the year of 329/ L.H which was the anniversary of his blessed birthday, he

1. Sheikh Mufid, **Irshad** 2:3366-337; and narrated in **Bihar al-Anwar** 50:234-231; **Manaqib of the family of Abi- Talib** 4:432; **Ihtijaj** 2:279.

took over the responsibilities of Imamate. Therefore, the short-term absence of Imam lasted for seventy years.

The characteristics of these times are the partial concealment of Imam al-Zaman from people, because, in these times, Imam was in contact with some of the believers. Other qualities of this period are the issuance of the letters and numerous signs, seals and orders on different subjects from the side of Imam. Also, another quality of this period is the existence of the same special representatives that the Imam examined directly. In fact, this period was a ceded period between the time of the direct appearance of Imams among people-which people had grown accustomed to in the period of the ancestors of Imam al-Zaman-and the period of full concealment of Imam from the people, that is to say, the long-term absence.

The long-term absence began from the time of the death of Sheikh Samari; the time that Imam commanded him not to appoint a successor, because the necessary aims of the short-term absence had been obtained. Today, the long-term absence is also continuing and will last until the day that Allah allows the reappearance of Imam and grants him action for his peaceful insurrection.

The characteristics of the long-term absence is concluding the discipline of special representatives, decreasing the number of issued letters, signs, seals and orders from the Imam and brining about the full concealment of the Imam from the people. But this full concealment makes an exception in certain states, which we will discuss and will account and explain what we have mentioned here briefly, in the next sections.

CHAPTER TWO
THE REASONS OF THE SHORT-TERM OCCULTATION OF IMAM MAHDI (‘A)

1. The means of the existence of short-term occultation

The absence of Imam Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance) is a preliminary action for his reappearance; an absence that by the necessity of divine wisdom, takes place for the planning of the cases of servants and prepares human society for the important Islamic commission which Allah will use to prove to be true by that Imam. And this is nothing but manifesting the preference of Islam over all religions and establishing a pure unified society in which everyone worships only Allah and Allah has no partner, and life is lived without any fear from the intrigues of hypocrites and polytheists, and as we will observe in a part that is related to the method after the appearance of that Imam, the religious texts and narrations indicate this matter.

The deviation that involved Islamic discipline, kept this discipline aloof from the forerunner and desirable role that Allah has determined for it; a discipline that by the interpretation of the noble Qur'an, should appear in the best form of the nation.

But the social, moral and economical deviation was to some extent rooted in this society and penetrated it so much that it lost the merit of insurrection for the important matter of the guidance of human society to Islamic justice and, therefore, Muslims lost this important matter and many other divine noble values, and all of the manifestations of the divine values were eliminated from their lives.

Political deviation, which is the other cause for the deviations, prevailed on the governmental discipline of Muslims, and corruption was in circulation in their governments; the governments which had no goal but plunging into unlawful pleasures and internal quarreling upon sovereignty; the quarrels that were taking place with the aim of

holding government and with desires of superiority, and it was to some extent that the Muslims' caliph lost his role as the servant of subjects and the defender of the human greatness and the worldly and other worldly interests of people, and turned to becoming a despotic ruler that has no purpose but creating corruption on the earth, seeking superiority and protecting his throne and crown in all possible ways, and he did it even at the cost of suppressing the most clear values that the great Prophet (s) taught the Muslims, the great prophet who they were supposed to be representing. For this reason we see that they tried extensively to fight with the innocent Imams of the pure household of the great Prophet (s), and the narration from Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), which we mentioned previously, about explaining the enmity of Umayyads and 'Abbassids with those honorable men and especially the promised Mahdi, points to this matter.

We conclude that the Islamic discipline, and naturally the human society of that time, was not actually prepared for bearing the great load of reformatory responsibility that Imam Mahdi was responsible for. Maybe one of the most eminent reasons of this saying was the attitude of the government in front of many Alawi movements, which were appearing in every point of the land of Islam, but they were soon confronted with the savage suppression of the government or were leading to the aberration and were keeping aloof from the intended goals and turned to the governments that do not differ much from other corrupted governments of their own time and their aims were extremely distant from the great peaceful aims of Islam.[1]

Under the shadow of these dangerous conditions and the passive attempts which the ruling system of Bani 'Abbas used for annihilating Imam Mahdi (‘a), it was necessary for Imam to put himself in place where he was protected where he could plan for the preparation of the preliminaries of his appearance as the reason of Allah in the shelter of this protection; an appearance without any fear from the danger of crime and annihilation from the side of enemies and protecting the earth from being devoid of the proof of Allah who is responsible for

1. Shahid Sayyid Muhammad Sadr (may he rest in peace) has done an analytic, supported and heavy-laden research relying on the sources of the Islamic history related to this period, which for learing more knowledge about it, you can refer to his book “The History of the Short-term Absence.”

guarding the religion of the pure Muhammadian Islam. This protective cover is called “absence.”

The noble narrations that have expressed that one of the secrets of the absence of the Imam is that he was in hiding due to the fear of being killed. Of course, this is a reason that is in conformity with the short-term absence. There are other reasons, like preparing human society for the appearance, which we will explain in the introduction when discussing the short-term absence.

2. The great Prophet (s) and Imams' (‘a) planning for the occultation of Imam Mahdi (‘a)

The Islamic traditional sources have registered many of the noble narrations which are narrated from the great prophet and Imams of the holy household, all of which announce the certainty of the occurrence of the absence of Imam Mahdi (‘a). On discussing the matter of the hidden birth of that Imam, we have narrated some of these narrations and now we relate other cases of these narrations:

For example, one of these narrations is a narration that Hafez Sadr al-Din Ibrahim Muhammad Hamubani Shafei has narrated it in his book known as Farad al-Samtain, and other authors and scholars of Islam with different documents, have narrated it from Ibn 'Abbas, and this narration is as follows: a Jew by the name of Na'thal Abu-'Ammarah went to the messenger of Allah and asked questions from him about unification, prophethood, and Imamate, and the great prophet replied to his questions perfectly, therefore, the Jew submitted to the religion of Islam and said: “I bear witness that there is no Allah but Allah, you are the messenger of Allah and these are your successors.” I have seen this matter in previous Jewish books. I have seen what Moses has recommended us regarding it and it is said: “when the ‘last times' come, a prophet will appear who is called Ahmad” and he is the last of the prophets, there is no prophet after him and from his lineage will come pure and pious leaders as the number of the Asbat (the children) of Bani Israel (twelve numbers).”

The great Prophet (s) said to him: “O, Aba-'Ammarah, do you know Asbat?” Abu-'Ammarah replied: O, messenger of Allah, yes, they were twelve members.”

The great messenger (s) said: "One of them was Lawi ibn Arhiya." The man replied: "O, messenger of Allah! Yes I know him. He is the one that was hidden from Bani Israel for years and then he returned and revived the religion of Moses after annihilation and when it was worn-out, and he fought with a king by the name of Farita and killed him."

The great messenger (s) said: "Whatever happened in Bani Israel will take place in my nation and every single detail will be repeated, my twelfth son will be absent and he won't be seen, and a time will come to my nation where there will remain nothing of Islam but its name and nothing from Qur'an but its script. In this time, Allah will allow him to appear and come, and then he will be re-appear, bringing Islam and give a new life to the religion."

Then, the great Prophet (s) said: "Happy is he who loves them and happy is he who takes hold of them and woe to their enemies."[1]

It is also narrated that the great messenger (s) said: "The one who denies al-Qaim -who is from my children- in the time of his absence has died an ignorant (Jahaliyyat) death."[2]

The holy Prophet (s) also said: "I swear to the one who appointed me in truth as the one who gives glad tidings; al-Qaim, one of my children, will be hidden from among my nation according to the contract that is tied from my side, until people say: Allah no longer needs the family of Muhammad. And other people doubt his birth, so, whoever understands his time, he should take hold of his religion and not allow Satan to enter in his religion because of his doubt in him (Imam), and if he does not do this work, Satan will expel him from the nation and religion…"[3]

He (s) also said: "And Allah has appointed leaders from the lineage of Husayn ('a) who recommend people to my order and protect from my will among people and the ninth of them is Qaim of my holy

1. **Faraid al-Samtin** 2:132.
2. **Kamal al-Din** p. 413, **Kifaiah al-Athar** p. 66; of course there are many prophetic narrations which hint to this point and you can refer to them to Mu'ajam Ahadith Al-Imam Al-Mahdi ('a) the section related to the prophetic narrations for reading them and preferring to them 1:256-267.
3. **Kamal al-Din** p. 51, **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:459.

household and Mahdi of my nation; the one who is the most similar of people to me in his physical appearance and form, speech and deeds, he will appear after a long absence which causes a confusing amazement, he will manifest the order of Allah and reveal the true religion…."[1]

In another narration, the great prophet said: "That son will inevitably be hidden." It was asked from him: "O, messenger of Allah! Why he will be absent?" The holy prophet said: "For fear of being killed."[2]

Also the holy Prophet (s) said: "Mahdi is from my children. There is an absence for him and amazement which people mislead in it, he will appear with the reserves of the prophets and he will fill the earth with justice as it has filled with oppression and injustice."[3]

Also it is narrated from Imam Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb ('a) in a narration: "…but I thought about the child that will be born from my lineage, the child who will be my eleventh son. He is Mahdi; he is the same one who fills the earth with justice, as it has filled with oppression and injustice; he will have a wonderful absence, during which some people will be greatly misled and some people will find the way of guidance through it…"[4]

Also he said: "Our absent son will have two absences one of which is longer than the other; in the time of his absence no one will be firm on his Imamate but the one who has firm certainty and true recognition".[5]

In this regard, there is a narration from Imam Hasan ibn 'Ali (Imam Hasan 'Askari) which we mentioned in the discussion about the birth of that Imam.

Also this narration is mentioned from Imam Husayn ('a) about that particular Imam: "The owner of this matter [Mahdi] will have two disappearances. One of these will be prolonged to the extent that

1. **Kifaiah Al-Athar** p. 10.
2. **'Ilal al-Shari'a1** p. 243; and narrated from it, **Bihar al-Anwar** 52:90.
3. **Faraid al-Samtin** 2:335; Hafiz Sulaiman Hanafi, **Yanabi'a al-Mawadah** p. 488.
4. Kulaini, **Kafi** 1:273.
5. Hafiz Hanafi, **Yanabi'a al-Mawadah** p. 427.

some people will say: he has died or he has emigrated from the world. Others will say: he has gone among us. And no one knows his place even from the saints and others but the servant who serves him".[1]

This narration has been narrated from Imam Sajjad Zain al-'Abidin (‘a) in this regard: “in Qaim there is a similarity with Noah, and it is his longevity."[2]

That Imam has also said: “indeed Qaim of us (the holy household) has two periods of being hidden one of which is longer than the other."[3]

And this narration has narrated from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (‘a):

“Qaim, of the family of Muhammad, has two periods of being hidden, one of them is longer than the other.”[4]

It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (‘a): “If the news of your Imam's concealments reaches you, do not deny it.”[5]

He also said: “Our Qaim has two periods of concealment, the final one of which will be prolonged… Allah has willed to perform the tradition of the prophets in Qaim (‘a). Therefore, O, Sodair, the disappearance of our Qaim should be equal to the concealments of all the prophets in order that he makes full use of all of their customs.[6]

Also this narration is narrated from Imam Musa Kadhim (‘a): “I have risen according to the truth, but the Qaim who removes the enemies of Allah from the earth and fills it with justice as it has been filled with oppression and injustice, he is my fifth son who has a long period of concealment….”[7]

Additionally, this narration has registered with a tradition from Imam Rida who has said: “… he is my fourth child who Allah will hide and He will keep him under the veil for the amount of time He wants

1. **Al-Ishah Fi Ishrat Al-Sah** p. 13.
2. **Kamal al-Din** p. 321.
3. **Kamal al-Din** p. 323.
4. **Ghaibat N'umani** p. 172.
5. **Ghaibat Sheikh Tusi** p. 102.
6. **Kamal al-Din** p. 480.
7. **Kifaiah Al-Athar** p. 265.

then, he will show him, and by him Allah will fill the earth with justice as it is filled with oppression and injustice."[1]

It is narrated also from Imam Jawad ('a): "… there is no one among us (Imams) who does not make an insurrection, and guide people to the religion of Allah; but Qaim, who by him Allah cleans the earth from the pagans and those who deny Allah, and by him fills the earth with justice, he is the one whose birth is hidden and he is hidden from the eyes of people…."[2]

Also, it is narrated from Imam Hadi ('a): "…you won't see him"[3], and: "When your master becomes absent from the land of oppressors, wait for relief (his appearance)."[4]

The following has been narrated from Imam Hasan 'Askari ('a): I swear by Allah! The master of this matter comes to visit the house of Allah as a pilgrim every year in the time of Hajj. He sees people and knows them, people see him too but they do not know him…."[5]

Also that Imam said: "The leader and my proof after me is my son Muhammad. Whoever dies and does not know him as their Imam, has died an ignorant (Jahaliyyat) death. Be aware that there is a long period of concealment for him, which will be the cause of astonishment and misleading of ignorant people…"[6]

Also the Imam said: "… the name and nickname of this my son is similar to the name and nickname of the messenger of Allah (s); the same one who fills the earth with justice as it is filled with oppression and injustice. The example of this son among this nation is as the

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 376; and narrated from **A'alam Al-Wara** 2:241; **Kashf Al-Ghumah** 3:314.
2. **Kifaiah Al-Athar** p. 277; **Bihar al-Anwar** 50:283; **Ihtijaj Tabarsi** 2:449.
3. **Kafi** 1:286.
4. **Kamal al-Din** p. 380.
5. **Kamal al-Din** p. 440.
6. **Kifaiah Al-Athar** p. 292; and narrated from **Kamal al-Din from A'alam Al-wara** 2:253; **Wasail al shi'ah** 16:246, C 33 N 23.

example of Khodhor and Tholqarnein and I swear by Allah that he will be hidden from the eyes of the people…[1].”

The noble narrations that have been issued in this regard are numerous and these narrations are handed down by tradition from the ways of the religion of the holy household (‘a). Many of the keepers of Sunnites traditions, and also those from different religions, as we have seen, have related these narrations, many of which are narrated with legitimate documents. This is one of the clear reasons for ascertaining the legitimacy of the concealment of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and for the matter that this absence has taken place by the order of the exalted Allah; where their issuance and compilation in the traditional books has occurred many times before the event of the absence of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and the absence of that Imam has occurred after the absence of that Imam, in fact we can say that the absence of Imam Mahdi (‘a) has a certification and confirmation in those narrations and it confirms this point that the contents of these narrations have been correct and have originated from the divine inspirational sources and the blessed and exalted Allah who knows all that is hidden, and this can be the thing that compensates the weakness or the dispatching of the documentation[2] of some of these narrations.

Sheikh Mufid (may Allah be satisfied with him) says: “All of the pure Imams (‘a) had been given the news of the occultation of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and this is mentioned in the narrations that are narrated from these great men and are kept and compiled in the letters and books more or less around 200 years before the absence of that Imam, the descriptions of that absence have been explained and made clear for their Shi'ahs, and there is no one of the followers and companions of the Imams which has not written this group of narrations in the traditional sets and his books and has not registered them in his compilations; these are the books that are known as the compiled principles and are kept before the Shi'ah of the holy household…

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 384; Qutb Rawandi, **Al-Kharaej** 3:1174; and **A'alam al-wara** 2:249.
2. The despatching of document means that the existing narrators in the document of narration are connected periodically.

The writers of these books are not out of two states: either they have been before informed about the absence that occurred later and have been written it in their books that this supposition is impossible and those who are the owner of wisdom and investigation, know that such a thing is not possible or they have written a lie in their books and accidentally their lie has connected to the fact and whatever has occurred in the next years has matched exactly to the lies that these writers have written in different towns, different times and different books. This supposition is also as impossible as the first supposition so there is no way unless we say: they have obtained the matter of absence from their pure leaders, who are the keepers of the will of the messenger of Allah (s), retained it and compiled and registered the qualities and different levels of it in their books and principles. And it is under the shadow of such works that truth reveals and falsehood becomes annihilated, indeed the false will be annihilated.[1]

The other point that increases the clarity of this moral reason is that these noble narrations have pointed to the subtle details in the nature of absence, the identity of the Imam who becomes absent, the fact that he is the twelfth Imam, he is the ninth son from the lineage of Imam Husayn (‘a) and other details which is confirmed historically by no one but Imam Mahdi and on no other absence but his absence, and this is from the clear miraculous reasons that indicate the correctness of Imamate and concealment of that Imam whose reappearance we pray that Allah will hasten.

In this regard Sheikh Mufid says: all of the narrated narrations from the leaders of the household of the great Prophet (s) indicated that the expected Qaim should have two periods of concealment, one of them being longer than the other and in the short-term absence of that Imam, noble individuals are informed about him, but during the long-term concealment no one has news about him except reliable saints and those who are serving him… the narrations that point to this epigram had been registered and compiled many years before the birth of Imam Hasan 'Askari and his father and grandfather in the books and compositions of the Shi'ah Imamiah, and when the deputies and ambassadors of that Imam died (may they rest in peace), the accuracy of this information became apparent and was registered

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 19 the introduction of the author.

and the truthfulness of their narrators in informing of the prolonged concealment was revealed. This is amongst the very clear signs in the precision of the beliefs of Imamiah…"[1]

This reasoning is used in proving the authenticity of both the short and long-term absences, because the noble narrations have been spoken about both the absences and their details.

3. The reason for two phases of concealment

We said that the absence is a preliminary program necessary for planning the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (may Allah make haste for his coming), and performing his great world-wide reformatory commission.

The wisdom of Allah has required that this concealment have two phases.

The reason for this matter is clear; because if the full concealment happened accidentally, it would have destroyed a set of factors that are necessary for preparing the Islamic and general societies for the appearance of the Imam and for establishing the worldly government of Islam.

Because the general axis of this preparation, are preliminary exams, in which narrations point to the same epigram which we will explain in detail in the discussion about the long-term absence/concealment, and such an examination needs some firm idealistic beliefs and factors in order for it to be strong, accumulating experiments and gaining mental recognition merits in the way of preparing for the appearance.

Whatever the great Prophet (s) and the Imams (‘a) were approaching the time of the absence of Imam al-Zaman, they moved forward and performed more extensive and deep actions for planning and preparing people for the concealment, like informing people of the certainty of the absence, the secret birth of the owner of absence, the deployment of the scope of action of the organization of representatives and giving them the necessary Islamic training, like

1. Sheikh Mufid, **Iddeh Rasail** p. 362, fifth chapter about **Al-Fusul Al-Eshrat fi al-Ghaibat**.

the rules that the inference of legal orders and other matters that are based on. But with all these circumstances, the perfect planning for absence needed complementary steps and other comparative samples which can emphasize these programs and make them clear, and this was the same work that Imam Mahdi (‘a) performed during the short-term absence. That Imam always chose this way during this period which was the stage of transferring from the time of the full appearance of the Imams to the period of the full absence of Imam al-Zaman, and in fact the long-term absence was the last step in the way of planning for the long-term absence. We can perceive this fact clearly from the way of analyzing the method and aims of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and comparing these aims with the special characteristics of the long-term period absence. Therefore, we study the aims and method of that Imam in the short-term absence from this viewpoint in order that the relation between the Sirah of that Imam becomes revealed in the short-term and long-term absence.

4. Pursuing the news of Imam al-Mahdi (‘a) and his whereabout by 'Abbassi's government

It is clear from the narrations of the stage of short-term absence that the 'Abbassi government had always been following and pursuing news of Imam Mahdi (‘a), and they were certain about the existence of the Imam relying on the hearsay narrations from the great Prophet (s) about the twelve Imams. They knew that Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a) was the eleventh Imam and inevitably the twelfth Imam should be born, being the final leader and authentic narrations had been promised by successive hearsay, of his annihilation of the oppression government.

As we previously observed in Kulaini's narration discussing the matter of Imam's control over his representatives, the government's intention of searching and pursuing them reached the Imam himself. Therefore, we observe that the previous Imams and Imam Mahdi strongly emphasize on the point that everyone should be prohibited from mentioning the Imam's name during the short period of

concealment; because, if the Imam's name was known, the search activities would be intensified.[1]

Also we understand from the narration of Sheikh Tusi in the book of concealment that the 'Abbassi government had obtained news and information about the Imam and had taken action to attempt to assassinate him. By showing them that he was protected by the exalted Allah, Imam Mahdi (‘a) also confronted them.

It is written in this narration: it is narrated from “Rushayq” [who was one of the fellows of Maderani], who said: “The Caliph Mu'ataz al-'Abbassi sent someone for us (we were thirty people) and ordered each of us to mount a horse and take an extra horse with us and leave secretly. He told to us to go to Samarra as soon as possible. He gave us the characteristics of an area and a house and said: when you reach this house, you will see a dark-skinned servant there, you must enter the house by force, behead the person that you find in the house and bring me his head. We reached Samarra and did as he said; we found the house, we saw in the entrance-hall a dark-skinned servant who was patching a piece of clothing. We asked him about the master of the house, but I swear by Allah! The servant took no notice of us, according to the order, we entered the house by force and found that it was a very miraculous house, a curtain was hung up opposite of the door of the house and I have never seen a curtain more precious than this one, as it seemed that no one could ever had access to such a precious curtain at that time.

We didn't find anyone in the house, so, we drew the curtain. Suddenly we saw a large room behind the curtain which was like a sea full of water, at the end of the room was a mat on the surface of the water, and a man who had the most shining face we had ever seen in our lives, was standing on the mat performing a prayer. He didn't pay any attention to us at all. Ahmad ibn Abdullah went forward to enter the room, but he fell into the water and nearly drowned. He was struggling in the water until I stretched out my hand and pulled him out. After this he became unconscious for some time. A second member from my group also attempted to enter the room but his fate was as the fate of the first one. I was astonished and I said to the

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 441.

master of the house: I apologize to Allah and to you; I swear by Allah I don't know what is happening here and I am beside such a person; I repent to Allah. But he didn't pay attention to me and my words, and fear filled our hearts. We left him and returned.

When we returned, Mu'ataz was waiting for us. He had appointed doorkeepers at the gate of the palace who took us straight to him; we reached the palace of Mu'ataz well into the night. We entered and Mu'ataz asked us what had happened and we told him of the events that had occurred. Mu'ataz cried: Woe to you! Have you told anyone else about these occurrences? We told him no. Mu'ataz swore greatly and said: If I hear this subject matter from someone other than you, I will behead all of you. We didn't dare tell the story to anyone as long as Mu'ataz was alive.

CHAPTER THREE
THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF IMAM MAHDI (AS) DURING THE SHORT-TERM CONCEALMENT

1. How to prove the existence and the Imamate of Imam Mahdi (‘a)

This was the same aim that Imam Mahdi (‘a) followed when he performed prayer for his father's corpse-which we have previously discussed in detail- and this was one of the most important steps and activities of that Imam during the short-term absence. The importance of the subject of the recognition of people from the existence and Imamate of Imam al-Zaman becomes clear that this recognition is the basic base and pillar of the movement of Imam Mahdi (‘a) in the period of his absence; as you can understand from the noble narrations, salvation from aberration and ignorant death, depends on the recognition of Imam al-Zaman and resorting to obedience from that great man.

This Imam is completely hidden in the era of long-term absence; therefore, belief in his existence and Imamate is a starting point for obedience to him, following him and taking hold of his guardianship, and depends on the acquisition of a heartfelt confidence and being certain of his existence amongst people; to the level that the pious men can confront the doubts and heartfelt temptations under the shadow of this faith. In the era of the short-term absence, Imam Mahdi (may Allah makes haste for his noble appearance) was completing the preliminaries of divine activities which should be performed in the era of long-term concealment and one of these preliminaries, was creating the same heartfelt confidence in the existence and Imamate of that Imam in people. That Imam was performing this important affair with the meetings that he had with reliable persons, also by using different methods and showing magnanimities and miracles that no one was able to show but the Imam (‘a); these works have been written in historical narrations

which have spoken about the short-term absence and scholars have registered and recorded them in their books.[1]

2. Completing other needs of the nation in relation with Islamic learning

For more than two centuries, Imams of the holy household (‘a) were out to rally for a great number of needs of the Islamic nation in the era of long-term concealment; matters like the knowledge of the holy Qur'an and the custom of their great ancestor, the master of messengers (s). And the result of the attempts of those great men, was presenting a face of Islam being the pure firm religion that Allah has commanded all people to follow and to act according to its orders; a firm rope that is mentioned in the traditional societies of Islam Al-Thaqalayn, and they know taking hold of these two elements will lead to salvation from aberration and from an ignorant death.

This precious inheritance determines the limitations and frontiers of educational matters and clarifies the rules and principles of legal inference from the way of prolific traditional inheritance which narrates the custom of the great messenger (s) and the leaders who are from his household; the matter that caused the Imams to order their companions to retain and compile this precious inheritance in order that it be an original source for all schools and Islamic orders beside the holy Qur'an; the orders which the nation of Islam will require on the day of the reappearance of Imam Mahdi (‘a). The result of this prolific attempt were the noble narrations that the companions of the Imams accumulated in the books known as “the four hundred principles,” and their collection and compilation of all of these books ended in the era of the Imams before Imam Mahdi (‘a), and in these texts, most of the texts of the prophetic noble custom have been gathered.[2]

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1. R.to the books which are written about absence; the narrations which are written about coming to seek the honour of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) in the era of long-term absence. Many of these narrations are collected by Sayyid Bahrani in the book Tabserah al-Wali.
2. R.to Sayyid Ali Shahrestani, **Man'e Tadwin al-hadith- the means and results** pp. 397-465 the chapter related to the time of determining the prophetic custom before the school of Ahl al-bayt (‘a).

The twelfth Imam of the Shi'ahs, Imam Mahdi (‘a), completed all of the needs of the nation in the long-term concealment regarding to Islamic educational matters, and during the short-term absence, he completed all of the things that helped pious men for their movement and their perseverance in the right way and helped the Islamic nation in continuing its evolutional direction. And this is the second general aim of the Imam from the short-term absence and this matter is clearly seen in many of his issued letters.

3. Establishing the institution of the authorized representation

In this period, Imam Mahdi (‘a) determined and introduced a group of the most pious and reliable men among the Shi'ahs as his deputies and counsels; by the allowance and order of the Imam, these great men formed an organization for connections with the pious and, as we said before, the honorable grandfather of Imam al-Zaman, Imam Hadi (‘a) and before him Imam Jawad (‘a) and also, after Imam Hadi, Imam 'Askari (‘a), all supported and completed this organization as an introduction to the concealment of the Imam. Imam 'Askari was openly relying on some of his companions as dependable persons and introducing them as his notaries. For example, he said that Othman ibn Sa'id Amri was his attorney and subsequently the attorney of his son, Imam Mahdi, and before them he had been the attorney of Imam Hadi: “Abu-Amr is a truthful and honest man. He was considered reliable by the deceased and he is reliable before me in his life and his death; therefore, whatever he says to you was a message from me and whatever he brings to you, he brings it from my side.[1]”

Sheikh Saduq has mentioned the names of twelve of the attorneys of Imam Mahdi in the era of short-term absence and Sayyid Muhammad Sadr also added the names of another six persons to the previous twelve relying on what is written in historical sources and Rejali books.[2] Imam Mahdi has embarked directly for appointing these persons and in this regard he has issued the announcements, which are known as tawqi’ (order, seal, sign). With these tawqi’at he was

1. **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 215.
2. **The history of the short-term absence** pp. 609-628.

also able to identify and deny people who were fraudulently claiming to be from the council, when, in reality, they were not.[1]

But in the era of short-term absence, there occurred an important change in the organization of the council compared to the period of Imam Hasan 'Askari (‘a), and this change was a new post that Imam Mahdi created in this organization; this post determined the general representative or senior representative of the Imam and the pious men. This was a post that was unnecessary at the time of the previous Imams, because in the past, the Imams were apparent and all of his assistants were able to communicate with him, therefore, there was no need for a special representative to deputise from his side. But the absence of Imam in the short-term period, necessitated this as an important post in this organization until such a man be the official chosen reference for the believers; the believers who in the past had fallen into the habit of having one visible Imam at a time.

Determination of this assistant took place directly Imam Mahdi and this act was performed habitually by issuing one tawqi’, which was directly presented. As this act was performed for the first representative and in some cases, the next representative was determined by proclamation of the former deputy.

The Shi'ah leaders in the era of short-term absence and the four companions of Imam Mahdi who were administrators of this important post during the short-term absence include: Othman ibn Sa'id Amri; the same person whom we discussed was the deputy of Imam Hadi, Imam 'Askari and then the attorney of Imam al-Zaman (‘a), after him, his son Amr ibn Othman became his successor, after him Husayn ibn Noah and the last of these special ambassadors or four deputies has ‘Ali ibn Muhammad Samari, may Allah be satisfied of all of them.

Imam Mahdi had direct permanent guidance and control over all of the activities which these emissaries were performing, even down to answering idealistic questions of the believers that they were possibly quite adequate to answer from their own knowledge, themselves; this act gave a legal acknowledgment to the activities of these representatives. This matter can be understood from a few narrations.

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1. **Ghaibat Tusi** pp. 172-257.

For example, the narration which Sheikh Tusi narrates in the book of "absence" with a prolonged tradition about the third deputy of Imam al-Zaman (‘a), Husayn ibn Rooh Nobakhti, answering an idealistic question, posed by one of the believers, about the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a). When he narrates in this manner from the narrator of the tradition, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, who had attended the session in which Husayn ibn Rooh replied to the question: Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Ishaq-may Allah be satisfied of him-says: The next day I returned to Abul-Qasem Husayn ibn Noah while thinking to myself: did he make up the reply to yesterday's question? When I visited him, before I said a word to him he said to me: O, Muhammad ibn Ibrahim! If I fall from the sky to the earth and the birds of the sky snatch me or if a tornado threw me onto a remote land, I prefer that these things happen to me rather than I make up rules about the religion of Allah so, whatever I say, I have heard from the origin and proof of Allah, peace be upon him.[1]

It is clear that the same political conditions which necessitate the Imam of the time to conceal himself behind the curtain of absence, also never permitted that the activities of his attorneys of take place openly. Therefore, the first stipulation for selecting attorneys and specially particular attorneys, was that they should have a high recognizance for reservation of secrets and not disclosing the whereabouts of the Imam of the time, and maybe this is the reason for selecting Husayn ibn Rooh for special attorney-ship in spite of the fact that there were persons who were more knowledgeable and popular than him[2].

By stabilization of the organization of attorney-ship and special succession during the short-term concealment, in fact, the Imam of the time created a preface for believers to refer to the general attorneys in the era of long-term absence.

The general attorneys who the narrations have been expressed their total characteristics and Imam also has commanded people to refer to them in the era of long-term absence. During the short-term absence, that Imam prepared the background of this work by determining

1. **Ghaibat Tusi** pp. 198-199.
2. **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 240.

individuals that they had these qualities because, by observing these people, the nation will see that the quality of the chosen persons have the merit of general succession of the Imam of the time during the long-term concealment so, they were going to persons like them, in other words, the experience of the succession of the special attorneys who were determined samples from the side of innocent Imam (‘a), have cleared for the nation the legitimacy of reference to the general attorneys of the Imam during the long-term absence and from the other side, by presenting an example from the individuals that had this quality, it created a criterion for determining the competence or non-competence of the claimants for the succession of Imam during long-term absence in order that they seek help from it for determining the existence of the qualities that the lawful texts have been mentioned them as the stipulations of succession.

4. Protecting the dignity of faithful Community

The act for proving the existence of Imam (‘a) and introducing the Imam's attorneys to the Shi'ahs sometimes resulted in the leaking of news to the governmental system; in such cases, Imam acted personally in protecting the organization of attorneys in order that its desirable role be maintained during the short-term absence. For example, in the book of Kafi, Sheikh Kulaini narrates from Husayn ibn Hasan Alawi who said: “A man from the boon companions of Rooz Hosna[1] and other person who was with him, said to him: This is the same one who people accumulate the properties for and he has attorneys. Then he mentioned the name of all of the attorneys of the Imam of the time in different cities. This news reached the minister (Obaidollah ibn Sulaiman), and he intended to arrest them. The caliph said: Search and see where this man is, because this matter is very important. Obaidollah ibn Sulaiman replied: should we arrest all of the attorneys? The Caliph replied: No, but we will send a disguised group with an amount of money to them, and whoever takes the money from these people will be arrested. The narrator says: On the same days, a letter was issued from the side of the holy soul of the Imam of the time (‘a) to all of the attorneys and it was written in it

1. The governor-general of 'Askar whose name is also registered in some of the copies as Badr Hosna.

that from that time they should not accept any money from anyone, and they should deny the attorney-ship of that Imam. The narrator says: They sent a man to Muhammad ibn Ahmad that he didn't know. That man was secluded with him and said to him: I have a property that I want to give to The Owner of The Time, Muhammad said to him: You are mistaken, I know nothing of this matter. The spy continued to insist and speak affably to Muhammad ibn Ahmad in a manner of trying to create a friendly relationship with him, but Muhammad continued to act as if he had no idea about what he was talking about. They scattered their spies amongst all of the attorneys, but every single one of them refrained from taking money that was aimed to bait them.[1]

We understand from the narrations that are written about the method of Imam of the time during the long-term absence that the attempts of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) in preventing from the torture and assassination of the 'Abbassi governmental system-as we saw in previous item-was not only about the attorneys, but also these attempts have been included the protection from other believers in front of the oppression of the 'Abbassi 's system, and this had been a fixed custom in the method (Sirah) of the honorable fathers of that Imam; all of them have been tried as far as possible to observe the state of believers and remove sadness and pain from them.

One of the examples of observing the state of believers in this connection is a narration from Kulaini in Kafi which he re-counts from ‘Ali ibn Muhammad who said: “A letter was issued by the holy soul of Imam al-Zaman in which he denied Shi'ahs visiting the graves of Quraysh and Hireh. After some time, he summoned minister Baghataii and said to him: Go and visit Bani Forat and Barsyan and forbid them from visiting the graves of the Quraysh, because the caliph has commanded the appointment of guards around those graves and have obliged them to arrest whoever goes to visit them.[2]

The care of Imam to the Shi'ahs and pious men even includes supplying their social and personal needs, reconciliation among them, saying prayers for them, and supporting them by educational

1. **Kafi** 1:525.
2. **Kafi** 1:525.

recommendations, repying to their religious questions and instructing them in supplications and … all of which the historical sources related to that time have registered.[1]

In the next section we will mention two types of activities of Imam (‘a) in this time for proving the veracity of the mentioned aims. These two acts are: the issuance of letters and meeting pious men.

5. Issuing letters (Tawqi’at)

The historical sources, that have documented the methods of Imam Mahdi (‘a), are replete with text material known as tawqi’at comprising numerous letters and statements which the Imam issued during the short-term absence. The issuance of these letters and statements is from the palpable moral reasons which indicates the existence of that Imam and insurrection of him for the responsibilities of Imamate during his time of absence.[2]

Tawqi’ is one of the means of relationship and connection of the Imam with the pious men and the means of him giving them guidance; because the conditions of the time of absence time were so severe that they strongly limited direct contact. One of the factors that caused these letters that left a greater impression among the Shi'ahs and pious men, was the previous preparation of Imam al-Zaman and his honorable fathers for this matter, especially in the time of Imam Kadhim (‘a) who had spent a great part of his Imamate, which was about 35 years, in the prisons of Bani 'Abbas or under their severe control while his companions were also severely tortured. For having continuous relationship with the pious men, replying to their religious questions and giving them guidances and orders, the Imam was sending them letters that these letters did not cease even when he was imprisoned, and this work was done by innovational ways and means by the people the spying system of 'Abbassi's discipline to the point that they were unable to recognize them and find the traces of love for Ahl al-Bayt in them.

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1. R.to the history of short-term absence /367 and 597 afterwards.
2. R.to the second volume of the book of Maydan Al-Hikmah written by Muhammad ibn Fayd Kashani and the book of Al-Sahifah Al-Mahdiah compiled by Fayd Kashani, and other books which are written about absence and many samples of these letters are registered in them.

This act became more severe during the time of Imam Hadi and Imam 'Askari because of the great control of the 'Abbassi system regarding them. The 'Abbassi system brought these two honorable Imams to Samarra, which was the capital of the 'Abbassi empire and forced them to reside in this city which had some resemblance to a military castle and this city therefore always being referred to as as “army” or “garrison.” The compulsory residing of these two honorable Imams in this city, transformed their lives to resemble that of two prisoners.

Besides these hard conditions, the emphasis of these two honorable Imams for choosing this method, that is to say, the issuance of letters to reach the Shi'ahs was in fact a direct plan for the absence of their honorable son, Mahdi, because by this way, the pious men became familiar with this method and fell into the habit of it. By this act, doubts were removed and for accepting the act to the orders that were written in the letters and submitting to the substance of these letters, the ultimatum was delivered to people with a solid faith. Especially that, Imam al-Zaman (‘a) continued this line that his honorable father was following in his letters in order to stabilize faith in a wider form in the hearts of the believers and close the way for profiteers.[1]

A part of these letters were issued in replies to questions that were being sent to the Imam from believers via the four deputies. Another part of these letters was in the manner that, initially, the Imam, himself, embarked for sending letters in relation to some important cases, like supporting pious men or the Imam's representatives in relation to discovering any deviation amongst them or the false claim of some for representative status or in relation to determining the future deputies and representatives.

Also, these letters include all of the needs of believers, for example: the correct Islamic education and different Islamic orders in cases of idealistic, juridical, educational, moral life, the prayers and other needs of an Islamic nation in the era of absence, like referring people to the just jurists and emphasis on the continuation of the Imam's guardianship of the nation in the time of absence, also determining the signs of appearance and other cases of which we will point to in the next section and of which you will become familiar. In some of

1. **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 220.

these letters there were comparative samples for inference of the legal order from quoted traditions in order to inform the nation from the process of Ijtihad during the long-term absence and give them exercises[1], in a word, we can say that from one side these letters have been a means for leading people and protecting their dignity, and from the other side they have been a means for completing the needs of believers in the era of absence and expressing the facts and orders of Islam.

The believers became honoured by visiting Imam Mahdi (‘a)

Valid traditional authorities have quoted many of the narrations that narrate the meeting of the believers with Imam Mahdi (‘a) in the time of his absence. None of the books that are compiled about the history of Imams or the history of Imam Mahdi (‘a) are void of many of these narrations. Sheikh Saduq narrates from Muhammad ibn Abi-Abdullah a statistic from the number of people visiting in every point of the world of Islam with that Imam, and according to this statistic, the number of people who visited Imam al-Zaman in that time, were 86 persons. Mirzaye Noori has promoted this number to 304 and has relied on the narrations that are registered from valid sources[2] and among these narrations, many of them have been mentioned with valid documents, a great number of these people have visited Imam during the short-term absence and some of them have been visited by him in the life time of his honorable father Imam 'Askari (‘a). Of course, these narrations are especially about those who have observed Imam and have known him, not about those who have observed him but have not known him.

It can be understood from these narrations that Imam Mahdi has personally embarked for visiting believers in many conditions and the miracles and reasons of Imamate have been revealed by that Imam; as these miracles and reasons guided them to the faith in his Imamate and proved this matter for them; this is the same matter that is specified in the meeting of Isa Johari with that Imam in the year 268 L.H, in the region of Saber near the illuminated Medina; at the end of

1. Like the letters that Imam gave to Muhammad Ibn Abdullah Humairi and these letters are written in the book of **Ihtijaj** 2:438 onwards.
2. **Al-Najm al-Thaqib** pp. 208-210 printed by scientific Islamic.

the meeting and after presenting firm and certain reasons regarding his identity, Imam said to him: "O, Isa, if there were not deniers who always say: where is he? When was he created? Where he is born? Who has seen him? What has reached them by him? Of what has he informed you? And what a miracle did he perform for you? You would not be able to visit me, by Allah! People discharged Amir al-Mu'minin from his rank and position, fought with him and killed him in spite of the existence of many narrations that they were narrating from the great messenger (s) about him and they knew him well. Also, my other forefathers were afflicted to this fate, these people did not certify them attributed them to magic, serving the genii and et cetera which it is revealed to all people.

O Isa, inform our saints of what you have seen, but make sure this news does not reach the enemy, because in this case, this rank will be taken away from you.

I said to the Imam: My lord! Pray for me to be steadfast in this way.

Imam said: If Allah has not granted you resolution, you wouldn't be able to see me, now return to your work and commission victoriously.

I went out while strongly praising Allah the exalted.[1]

It becomes clear from the narrations about visiting that Imam during short-term absence that during these meetings, the Imam was supplying the needs of believers and he was continuing the custom of his pure honorable fathers. During these meetings, the Imam explained some of the cases and idealistic matters related to the long-term absence and was giving the believers the educational guides. Some prayers which were narrated from the way of Sunnah related to the absence of that honorable man, created a firm relationship between the Imam and the people, and also point to the achievements that Allah would soon grant him and which will be proved to be true by him in the time of his arrival.

Also, from these narrations it can be understood that many of the believers during the short-term absence were trying very hard to seek the honour of that Imam, especially during the time of Hajj, the

1. **Tabsereh Al-Wali** p. 197.

ceremony in which, according to the narrations, the Imam takes part every year.[1] Some of the narrations indicate the occurrence of this meeting in the time of Hajj and indicates also that some of the believers resorted to the four deputies for attaining such prosperity and that the Imam allowed such meetings with some of the devoted believers. For example, Sheikh Tusi in the book of "Absence" narrates the following: Muhammad ibn Yaqoub, *marfuan*[2] narrates from Zohri who said: I was insistent in my request to visit Imam and many times I went to Hajj for the same goal and I spent so much money doing this. Then, I wrote a letter to Amri and became his servant and companion, after that, I asked from him about The Owner of the Time. He said to me: There is no way to reach this matter. I showed humility and I pleaded with him. He said to me: Come to me tomorrow morning in the first hour. I went to him as instructed, he received me gladly along with a youth who was very good looking, sweet-smelling and in the style of merchants, and he had something up his sleeve like the merchants.

When I looked at him, he went near Amri and Amri pointed to me. I went to that youth and asked him questions, and he replied to all of my questions. Then he began to move to enter the house, a house that was not of much importance to us. Amri said to me: If you have another question, ask it; because you won't see him ever again. I went to ask him. But he didn't hear me and entered the house. He only said: Whoever delays performing the evening prayer until the stars of the sky appear and whoever delays performing the morning prayer until the stars of sky are not seen, he is cursed, cursed. And he entered the house."[3]

6. Proclaiming the end of short-term absence

Six days before the death of the fourth deputy of Imam Mahdi -may Allah hasten for his noble appearance- a letter was issued from him to the believers in which the end of short-term absence-and the period of the special deputies who had been directly determined by Imam al-

1. **Kafi** 1:337-339, **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 195.
2. Marfuan means a tradition which does not have a document related to the innocent Imam.
3. **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 164; **Ihtijaj Tabarsi** 2:298; **Wasail al shi'ah** 3:147.

Zaman-and the beginning of the long-term absence was announced. The text of this letter is as follows:

"In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful

O, 'Ali ibn Muhammad Samari; may exalted Allah grant patience and reward your brothers in your calamity. You will leave the world after six days, so settle your works, and do not make a will to anyone mentioning a successor that should undertake your work after your death, because the full absence has occurred, and there is no presence only by the command and allowance of the exalted Allah. And this presence will be after a long time when the hearts of people would have been hardened and the earth filled with oppression and injustice. Soon, some people will come to my Shi'ahs claiming that they have observed and visited me. Be aware that anyone who claims that he has observed me, before the coming of Sufyani and the occurrence of the cry, is a liar and he is calumniating, and there is no power and ability for anyone but the exalted and Great Allah."[1]

This was the last letter that was issued during the short-term occultation of Imam al-Zaman ('a) and this letter proclaims that the activities of the Imam have produced his intended aims of his short-term absence, and the stage has now been planned for his long-term absence. In the period of short-term absence, the reasons and clear evidence for proving the existence and Imamate of the Imam and the correctness of the long-term absence have been sufficiently and completely revealed either directly by the Imam or by his representatives. And all of these clear proofs and reasons have been collected and written down by many of well-known scholars of these periods[2], and the quality of profiting and benefiting the people from the soul of Imam al-Zaman during his absence and also the quality of

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 516, **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 242.

2. For example, we can point to the book of Kafi compiled by Sheikh Kulaini (may he rest in peace) which is one of the most important sources of culture and inheritance of Ahl al-Bayt ('a) about jurisprudence and ideas, the compilation of this book has performed during short-term absence, because Sheikh Kulaini-may he rest in peace- died in the year 329 (L.H) which is the same year of the death of the last special representative of Imam al-Zaman ('a), Sheikh Samari, that is to say, the end of the short-term absence.

investigation of that Imam regarding to the works and life of Muslims from behind the curtains of absence have been manifested for the nation of Islam and the believers and pious men. In the era of short-term absence, the Imam commanded people to refer to the jurists for newly-developed matters and happenings, and he specified that his existence was security for the inhabitants of the earth.[1]

The last point that we should like to indicate is that with the completion of the short-term absence, the generations of Shi'ahs, who had been contemporary to the visual presence of the Imams (‘a) and who had, therefore, been used to seeing the Imams (‘a), was ending and a new generation of Shi'ahs were coming into existence who were fully acquainted with the period of absence and were accustomed to it; this generation has been accustomed to the concept of the leadership of Imam al-Zaman's representatives and, for this reason, the nation of Islam received the necessary preparation for entering the era of long-term absence.[2]

1. That Imam has specified this matter in a letter that he issued in replying to the questions of Ishaq Ibn Ya'qoub. R.to **Kamal al-Din** p. 483; **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 176.
2. **The history of short-term absence** pp. 430-654; in the same source there are important explanations about the last letter of Imam al-Zaman to Sharif Thamari.

SECTION FOUR

Chapter One
The long-term occultation of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and its reasons

Chapter Two
Imam Mahdi's achievements in the long-term occultation

Chapter Three
Duties of the long-term occultation period

CHAPTER ONE
THE LONG-TERM OCCULTATION OF IMAM MAHDI (AS) AND ITS REASONS

1. The general axis of the activity of Imam Al-Zaman (‘a) in the era of long-term occultation

The general aim of the activity of Imam Mahdi (‘a) during the long-term absence is taking care of the Islamic nation, preparing this nation for the stage of appearance, rising for the great commission of annihilating oppression and injustice, establishing divine justice government all over the earth and founding a pure unified society, all of which we will speak in detail about in the section related to the method of the Imam after his appearance.

In other words, the general axis of the method of the Imam during his long-term absence is planning for his reappearance. This planning involves taking care of the people and supporting their faith, retaining and strengthening activities and building them during the generations contemporary to him and also protection of the prophetic mission of the last Prophet (s) from alteration. Additionally, in these periods, the Imam embarks on other commissions and responsibilities of his Imamate as far as it is possible for him, and although these works are performed with more hidden methods to what was performed during his short-term absence, by this the same works that benefited the people from his existence is like benefiting the earth from the sun that is hidden behind a cloud.

This is the general aim of the method of that Imam during the long-term concealment, which will be observed clearly from the narrations that are written about the acts of that Imam in the long-term period.

Before entering to the discussion and giving examples from these activities, we look generally to some of the cases that are expressed by noble narrations about the reason and secrets of absence, because, it is clear that planning for appearance is possible by removing the

causes of absence. Therefore, recognizing the causes of absence can make clear the nature of the activities of Imam Mahdi (‘a) in the time of absence.

2. The reasons of occultation in the noble narrations

A set of the noble narrations have spoken about and expressed the reasons for the absence. First we mention some cases of these narrations for relying on the reasons that these narrations point to. Of course, there are many similar cases for each of these narrations, which the narrators have narrated with various documents:

1. Sodair has narrated from his father from Imam Sadiq (‘a) who said: “Our Qaim will have a long absence. I said to that Imam: O, the son of the messenger of Allah (s), what is the reason for this absence? That Imam replied: because, Allah, the Glorious has willed to implement the customs that the prophets have had in their absences, for that Imam. Then, Sodair! That Imam should inevitably be absent equally to the all of the absences which the prophets had, because the exalted Allah says: (you will certainly change from one position to other position), that is to say, the customs of those who have been before you.”[1]

Abdullah ibn Fadl Hashemi narrates that: “I heard from Imam Ja'far Sadiq (‘a) that: The Owner Of This Affair will be inevitably absent and during this absence, false men will fall into suspicion.

I said to that Imam: May Allah sacrifice me for you, what is the reason?

That Imam replied: It is for a matter that we are not allowed to disclose.

I said to the Imam: So, what is the philosophy of the absence of that Imam?

Imam replied: The philosophy of the absence of that Imam is the same philosophy of the absence of other proofs of Allah. The philosophy of this matter will not be revealed until after the Imam's appearance, and it is as the philosophy of the works that were done by Khidr (‘a) and they did not reveal to Moses until Moses was separated

1. **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:486-487.

from him. O son of Fadhl! This is a matter from the matters of the exalted Allah, a secret from the secrets of Allah and a hidden affair from the treasure of the hidden knowledge of Allah, and as we know, the Glorious Allah is wise, I verify that all of the works of Allah have a philosophy, although its reason is not revealed to us."[1]

2. One of the other narrations about this subject is the narration that Zurarah has narrated from Imam Baqir (‘a) who said: "Indeed there is an absence for Qaim before his appearance.

I said to that Imam: Why?

That Imam replied: For fear. And Imam pointed to his stomach. Zurarah says: The aim of Imam from fear was the fear of being killed.[2]

One of the other narrations that is mentioned about this subject, is the narration of Abdullah ibn Ata from Imam Baqir (‘a). He says: "I said to that Imam: You have numerous Shi'ahs in Iraq, I swear by Allah that there is no one like you among your family, so, why you do not rise?

Imam said to me: O, Abdullah ibn Ata! You have listened to the fool, I swear by Allah! I am not the one who should rise and fill the earth with justice.

Abdullah says: I said to Imam: then, who is he?

Imam replied: Search for the one whose birth is hidden from the eyes of people; such a person is your owner; verily, there is no one from us who becomes a byword among people and becomes an idiom among the people of all classes unless he is killed by oppression or jealousy."[3]

3. And the narration of Hasan ibn Mahboob ibn Ibrahim Karakhi is as the same, who said: "I said to Imam Sadiq, or someone else said to that Imam: I wish Allah grants you a happy ending, wasn't ‘Ali powerful in the religion of Allah?

Imam said: Yes.

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1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 481; **'Ilal al-Shari'a** 1:245.
2. **'Ilal al-Shari'a** 1:246; **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 176; **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 201.
3. **Kafi** 1:342; **Ghybat Nu'amani** pp. 167-168.

That man said: Then why did people overcome him and why couldn't he prevent them from doing this and what stopped him from carrying out this action?

Imam replied: A verse from the Glorious Allah prevented him.

He says: I said to Imam: what verse?

Imam replied: The speech of Allah the Glorious who said: If pagan and pious man were distinct, we would absolutely torment the pagans with a painful torture. But, because Allah the Glorious has placed some pious descendants in the loins of hypocrites and pagan men, so Imam ‘Ali (‘a) didn't kill fathers, in order that these descendants eventually emerge from their loins. Therefore, after these descendants emerge from their loins and come in to the world, he can gain victory over whoever he wants and fights with, also Qaim of our Ahl al-Bayt will not appear but after the pious offspring appear by the permission of Glorious Allah; then, when those descendants have appeared, he, also, will appear and he will fight and make Jihad with those who confront him.”[1]

4. And also a narration that is narrated from Imam Sadiq (‘a) in this connection: “I swear by Allah! Whatever you are waiting for, it will not occur until you become pure, your good ones and bad ones separate from each other, then one-tenth of you will pass away and there will only remain a few of you that are steadfast in the way of the truth. Then he read this verse: Did you think that you will enter paradise without the fact that Allah will make known your patient ones and those who make Jihad?”[2]

5. It is also narrated from Imam Baqir (‘a): “Our government is the last government, no family remains that his government is stable unless it comes to the throne before us, and it is in order that when people observed our method and government in the time of governing, they can't say that we behave according the method of Imams, and this is the word of the Glorious Allah who says:

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1. **'Ilal al-Shari'a** p. 147, **Kamal al-Din** p. 641.
2. Humairi, **Qurb al-Asnad** p. 162, and narrated from that, **Bihar al-Anwar** 52:113.

And the [good] end belongs to the virtuous men."[21]

6. And there is a narration from Imam Rida ('a) who said it in response to a man who asked him about the reason of the absence: and in order that when our Qaim rises with a sword, there be no responsibility for him to swear allegiance to anyone."[3]

This matter with close words narrated from the Imams ('a). Among them there is a narration from Imam Mahdi which is issued in reply to the matters of Ishaq ibn Ya'qoub: "But the reason of the occurring of absence is that Allah) says: (O those who believed, do not ask from the matters that if they are revealed to you, you will be sorrowful). Indeed, there was no one among my fathers without opposition to swearing allegiance of a rebellious man of his time on his responsibility, but when I come and rise, I have not have the obligation of swearing allegiance to any rebellious person on my responsibility."[4]

7. Imam al-Zaman-may Allah make haste his noble appearance- in his first letter wrote to Sheikh Mufid in this manner: "As long as the government and sovereignty of the world is in the hands of lewd men, we will reside in a remote place far from the houses of oppressors, according to what Allah has shown us, this has ours and our Shi'ahs best interests."[5]

8. In his second letter to Sheikh Mufid, Imam said: "If our Shi'ahs - may Allah grant them obedience- are faithful by knowing sympathy on the promise and contract that is on their responsibility, the blessing of our visit will not be withheld from them, and soon the prosperity of our observance will reach them by the sincere recognition. But, sad news falls to us from our Shi'ahs, which we did not expect from them,

1. *Surat Al-Maidah, 5:101.*
2. **Narration is in Ghaibat Tusi** p. 282 and the verse is in the *Surat A'raf, 7:128.*
3. **'Ilal al-Shari'a** 1:245, **'Uyun Akhbar Al-Rida** 1:273.
4. **Kamal al-Din** p. 483, **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 176.
5. **Maiden al-Hikmah** 2:303, **Bihar al-Anwar** 53:174.

and therefore the prosperity of our meeting has been taken away from them…"[1]

These were the cases of the brightest, most noble traditions, which were narrated in relation to the means and reasons that were mentioned for the absence. Of course, there was an overlap among these narrations for mentioning the means of absence whose hints we will explain in these eight points:

Accumulating and using the experiences of the last nations

The wisdom of Allah in managing the affairs of his creations necessitated that Imam Mahdi hide behind the curtain of absence and the philosophy of this matter was the same philosophy that in the last nations necessitated that some of the last prophets go behind the curtain of absence, and because this mission and religion is the last religion and the end of the divine religions, whatever was accomplished in the other religions and nations, should be proved to be true in this nation too; therefore, as the fulfillment of the aims of other heavenly mission because of the lack of having aptitude in the previous nations necessitated the absence of some of their prophets, it is also in this manner in the nation of Islam. Because, certainty of the aims of the religion of the last prophet of Islam necessitated that the end of executors of this religion, that is to say, Imam Mahdi ('a), go behind the veil of absence in order for this nation to find full competence for certainty of religious aims, and it is clear that this reason is general and includes the reason of other absences which had taken place in the previous religions and other reasons that the other tribes mention concerning the matter of absence.

Whatever is observed in this group of narrations is that these narrations deem that absence is one of the divine secrets that is not revealed before the absence has ended with the appearance of the Imam and discovery of the secret is not allowed. This group of narrations does not indicate all of the means and reasons for the absence, but they point to some of the causes for the absence and believe that there are other means and reasons for it, and the discovery of all of them before his appearance is not advisable for

1. **Ihtijaj** 2:325; and narrated from it, **Maiden Al-Hikmah** 2:306; **Bihar al-Anwar** 35:176.

everybody. In any case, faith in the absence is due to faith in the wisdom of Allah.

The security factor

As in the absence of the prophets of Allah, like Moses and Jesus and other prophets, the fear of being killed by the enemies has mildly to do with the occurrence of concealment, it is very clear that this is also true in the case of Imam Mahdi (‘a), as the 'Abbassi government had grown an undying need to kill him, and at least during the short-term absence, it was a reason for the basis of his occultation.

It is apparent that the aim of absence is protecting the existence of the Imam, who is the proof of Allah for the people, and it is so that the world of Allah is not without the divine Qaim; a guide who guides people to the command of Allah.

But in spite of the fact that all of the pure fathers of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) were the proofs of Allah for the people and all of them were confronting threats of death and enmity from the side of the oppressive governments of their time, and they were killed by a sword or poison[1]; what is the secret that being absent from the eyes of people was allocated only to the twelfth Imam?

The answer is very clear, because that Imam is the end of the line of the pure Imams, and it is he who is compelled to establish the worldly government of Islam, he is the same one that the Glorious Allah accomplishes his promise for manifesting Islam and giving superiority to this religion over all of the religions and bequeaths the earth to the pious men, then, inevitably, his tender soul should be protected in order that he can accomplish this great task. Additionally, because the 'Abbassi government had little information about his existence they fervently attempted to kill him whilst he was a newborn baby in order that the great reformatory commission of that Imam would be left unsuccessful.

This reason is effective also about the long-term absence, because until all necessary factors and reasons for the certainty of the great

1. **‘I'atiqadat al-Saduq** p. 99 and narrated from it, **A'alam al-wara Tabarsi** 2:297, C 5; first subject of the seven subjects in absence, **Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah** p. 272.

aim and commission of Imam al-Mahdi (‘a)-like accumulating friends and companions-is not prepared, lifting the curtain of absence will cause the Imam to be exposed to danger. Because the ruler of oppression in every time will attempt to annihilate that honorable Imam and they will kill him before his reformatory commission is accomplished; the same that they did with his honorable fathers and forefathers. This subject is very clear and it can be well understood from the explanation that Imam Baqir (‘a) gave in the second tradition for Abdullah ibn Ata.

Providing the suitable opportunities for delivering the truth to the individuals and allowing each and every one to receive the Divine Bounty

Allowing each and every good individual, who are believers to be born from the lineage of the unbelievers, was another factor for the occultation of Imam al-Mahdi (‘a). The aim is giving the opportunity to deliver the fame of the religion of Allah to all people in order that the fact of the divine and Islamic mission, of which Imam al-Zaman is its carrier, is revealed to all and consequently, enabling people who are related to the deviated schools and surviving generations of deviated people to accept the way of Allah, believe in the Mahdawi aims and join in the lines of the companions of expected Mahdi (‘a).

It is manifested that this reason openly and directly interprets the cause for delaying the appearance of the Imam, and it reveals this point is not directly related to his absence and he will be continuing to do so until he finishes preparing this factor which is one of the necessary and certain factors for his appearance. Because, the reappearance of the great Imam signifies the immediate beginning of the elevated victorious revolution and his great reformatory commission and he will immediately bring about the painful torture of the deviants.

The preliminary test of the generation of reappearance

During the hard unpleasant conditions which are experienced along with the absence of Imam al-Zaman (‘a), the necessary preparation and experience of the people of the world, and especially Shi'ahs, has increased for this matter and it is clear that belief in the Imam and his absence is an important factor in supporting the faith of those who are

stable in their faith of the Imam. Because faith in the occultation is a high rank of certainty and faith in what is hidden and delivers people from becoming too deeply hypnotized by materialistic and perceptible things as they believe in something that they can't see. The first verses of the Surat of Baqarah reckons faith in what is unseen is the clearest proof of the hidden and faith to it, and in Imam Mahdi (‘a) in his absent period, especially, when we have in mind the length of this absence.[1]

Therefore we observe: these noble narrations speak and praise greatly the believers of the era of absence who, in spite of all idealistic doubts which are resulted from the absence of that Imam, are stable and steadfast on the religion of Islam and the method of Mahdawi.

Therefore, we understand that the state of absence is one of the factors of preparation of the companions of Imam Mahdi (‘a). This is true in the case that, faith in the absent Imam, is the cause of penetrating faith in the heart of the believers. He is known as the guarantor of the one who will free a person from the captivity of material things and observations. And it is the same faith that grants the necessary competence for them to help Imam Mahdi (‘a) to reach his goal and his great reformatory commission.

Manifesting the debility of other schools

Proving the debility of the other schools in accomplishing the intended prosperity and perfection of the human society, openly forces all of the human society to show a positive reaction to the great reformatory commission of Imam al-Zaman (‘a). Proving their weakness will remove this desirable reaction in order that the divine goals that are related to the reappearance and in the course of time, the people of society will no longer be deceived by the false mottos of material and non-material schools.

Keeping the spirit of fighting oppression

Imam al-Zaman (‘a) is the one who will fill the earth with justice as it was previously filled with oppression and injustice; after delivering full ultimatum to the deviated ones, the Imam (during the long-term absence and before it) will remove and eliminate with his sword the

1. **Kifaiah Al-Athar** p. 56; **Yanabi'a al-Mawadah** p. 422.

oppressive rulers and the sovereignty of corruption. Therefore, the appearance of that honorable man will be along with a decisive movement from his side, in which there is no way of peace and compromise with its deviated members, and from here it will be necessary that this will lead to the great quality of the followers of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) and it should be manifest in them in the time of appearance, and maybe it is the meaning of the noble narration which says: “In order that there be no swearing of allegiance to any rebellious leader under his (Imam Mahdi) responsibility.”

It is clear that such a forceful character causes oppressors to want to prevent this work using their best efforts kill the Imam, force him to compound with them, or to allow him to only complete half of his mission before the beginning of this movement preparing suitable conditions and necessary numbers of his friends and assistants; a policy which his honorable fathers also used in front of the oppressors. This matter had many dangers within itself, like weakening the fighting spirit with oppression before believers who were observing their Imam, who is bound to completely annihilate oppression, but he has fully chosen silence. Additionally, supposing that adopting this negative attitude, again preventing the seditions of oppressors and their continued attempts for killing that great Imam, was not obtained. Otherwise, he should rise before preparing the necessary factors for gaining victory in performing his commission, which will end again in his killing before obtaining his great aim.

Therefore, before the completion of the necessary conditions for that Islamic movement, he should refrain from appearing, and should hide behind the curtains of absence in order the he can gradually complete his activities for preparing the necessary factors for gaining victory in the great mission of the time of his reappearance.

The occultation and the interest of the work of Imam and believers

The reason that is pointed to in the narrations, is a brief reason which contains the expression of one of the moods of divine philosophy in relation to his absence, for this reason that the interest of the affair of the Imam and believers is in his absence; maybe the meaning of this matter is that in the shadow of the hard and antithetical conditions with the aims of Mahdawi movement, absence is the best possible

method for the insurrection of Imam Mahdi (‘a) to perform the commissions of Imamate, as also we pointed to in the sixth hint. And maybe the aim of this matter, that the interest of the Shi'ahs and those who believe in the existence of the Imam is in his absence, means that by being put in the conditions of the absence of Imam, they will conquer new horizons of preparation and evolution in their lines and their successive generations; (previously mentioned) in order that a generation can find the merit of granting the circumstances for the great insurrection of Mahdawi quantitatively and qualitatively. And maybe the aim from the interest of the nation is protecting their souls from annihilation because of an untimely insurrection and before preparing the desirable Islamic movement or because of their debility for helping Imam desirably in the insurrection that is without absence, which such attitude from the side of nation has seen in the insurrection of Imam Husayn (‘a), and before him in the caliphate of his honorable brother Imam Hasan and his honorable father Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a).

Not preparing the desired number of companions

The last factor mentioned in the narrations, is not completing the necessary number of the friends and assistants of the Imam for performing the great reformatory commission quantitatively and qualitatively; a commission that needs sufficient helpers and assistants with a great level of devotion to the religion of Muhammad and its aims, the necessary knowledge for this matter and also the sufficient recognition from the intrigues of the enemies. As these companions should have a Jihadi experience; an experience which is necessary for entering in a revolutionary and trenchant movement against blasphemy, polytheism, debauchery and hypocrisy. Maybe this reason completes the fourth factor.

CHAPTER TWO
IMAM MAHDI'S (AS) ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE LONG-TERM OCCULTATION

As we indicated in the introduction of discussion, the method of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and his movements during the long-term absence has centered around the preparation of the society for the appearance of the Imam and an attempt to remove the reasons which caused his absence, so, it can be said: in the periods of absence, the Imam leads the way for growth and nourishment of the nation of Islam and makes use of the experiences of the previous generation; he also attempts delivering the truth to all people, helping and aiding those who work towards spreading the pure religion of Islam and protecting it. The Imam is always planning to provide certainty to the process of examination and choosing the generation of his appearance in order to prepare them for this stage, and he will divulge the inefficiency of other schools and their debility in verifying the desired prosperity of human beings. The Imam attempts to protect and preserve the spirit of combating oppression and he will frustrate the actions of the enemies intended for annihilating this spirit. The Imam has made efforts in taking care of all of these affairs. But all of them will have been accomplished by using secret methods most of which will be revealed at the time of his reappearance, and many of the events that have occurred during the time of his absence, all of which were for the purpose of verifying the aims that we mentioned, will be manifest at the time of his appearance; even those actions, the reason for whose occurrence, we do not know and for which the means and reasons, which spring to our minds, are inadequate to interpret them.

1. The Imam providing care through Islamic discipline

In his first letter to Sheikh Mufid (may he rest in peace), Imam Mahdi (‘a) wrote:

"…Indeed we are informed of your news and there is nothing of your news and matters that is hidden from us. We know that because of the works of many of you, that have gone far from the method of previous pious men, and who have left their promise behind and acted like fools, you have suffered from contempt and abjectness because of their doing. Verily, we will never neglect regarding your state and we never forget you, and if it was not in this manner, indeed, misfortunes would have descended on you and you would be trampled under the feet of your enemies."[1]

Imam Mahdi ('a) was always searching for the conditions of the believers, and all of the changes that they experienced; they had all been within the circle of his school. He is very well acquainted with the actions that enemies would carry out in order to annihilate Shi'ahs and to lead them to frailty and weakness, and he implements the necessary actions for removing them from danger in different forms. This extreme care is one of the basic factors which has been responsible for the protection of the followers of the religion of Ahl al-Bayt ('a) during history and successive generations; the nation that in spite of the fact of the intensity of the attacks with which they had been confronted by their enemies and governments, attacks caused mental and bodily assassination and, in spite of the fact of atheism which took place against them during the protracted centuries, has remained alive, vigorous and firm. Surely, we can say that if Imam Mahdi was not attentive of the nation of Islam and the followers of the religion of Ahl al-Bayt ('a), undoubtedly, these vast bodily assassinations and mental wars which the history of Islam has observed against the followers of the religion of Ahl al-Bayt ('a), would have been able to annihilate and remove this group mentally and physically from the stage of the world.

2. Guarding the pure Islam and strengthening the process of Ijtihad

In the era of the long-term absence, Imam Mahdi ('a) rises also for the heavy responsibility of guarding and protecting of the pure Islam, which its flag carried by the followers of the religion Ahl al-Bayt ('a), which this is one of the basic responsibilities of the position of Imamate. One of the things that kept the Imam busy was the

1. **Ihtijaj** 1:323, narrated from that Maiden **Al-Hikmah** 2:303.

important responsibility, in the time of absence, of strengthening of the process of Ijtihad of the jurists and scholars, and preventing them from gathering false opinions in any possible way.

Allamah (the scholar) Karajoki says in explanation of this matter: "the existing texts and narrations about orders (*Ahkam*) reaches us by narrations in a manner whereby the probability of error and forgetfulness is not impossible, and they are quoted to us by those who may leave a correct subject and refrain from quoting a true matter. Therefore, we can never be sure of the non-occurrence of such matters among these narrators and scholars. Unless there is an infallible person behind these people who can be the witness for their words and knowledgeable about their works, and if they were misled, he can guide them and if they forget anything or refrain from frankly saying the truth, he can remind them.

Although Imam al-Zaman ('a) is hidden from their eyes and they do not know him personally, the Imam exists among these people, he observes their states and knows everything about them, and if they give up the idea of quoting the narrations, or deviate from the way of truth, he is no longer allowed to be in disguise and Allah will expose him and the Imam will prevent them being deviated and taking the false path, and reveals the truth and proves reason for the creatures.[1]"

Of course, the meaning of appearance here is not the general appearance. But the aim is the limited appearance of that Imam for some of the professors and scholars and it is to some extent necessary for manifesting the truth. This is from the subjects that teachers have discussed in the chapter of "consensus of opinions" and have researched. For example, Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Mojahed writes in the book of Mafatih al-Usul:

"…Our agreement in the matter of consensus of opinions is based on the rule of grace; a rule which necessitates that Allah choose an Imam as leader for the people, in order that when the nation had consensus of ideas about a false matter, he prevents them from having these kinds of ideas and rejects it. And this is one of the greatest graces of Allah, and even if this matter was not possible, Allah would accomplish this matter using hidden means… the existence of Imam

1. Allamah Karajoki, **Kanz al-Fawaid** 2:219.

al-Zaman (‘a) in the time of absence is absolutely from the graces of Allah and that Imam, in the time of absence, accomplishes all work that is necessary for the guidance of the nation; because the appropriate thing for this work exists and there is no obstacle for it. Such a grace was granted to the pure Imams (‘a) before the absence too. Therefore, according to the origin, besides the hearsay narrations that indicate its duration, this matter is also necessary for the Imams after the time of absence.

This matter was recorded in various narrations from the great Prophet (s) and the pure Imams (‘a) with similar words and meanings. It is narrated by the great messenger (s): “Indeed, for fighting with any heresy which annihilates faith, there is a guardian of my household who has been appointed for defending from the false faith and religion of the people; he will manifest the truth and he will return the trick and deceit of the deceitful, themselves.”

And it is narrated from the great prophet and his holy household: “There are some just people in every generation among the nation of Islam who remove the alterations of those who exaggerate the religion of Allah, he removes the sectarianism of those who are on the false path and the interpretation of fools.”

In another tradition from the pure Imams (‘a) it is narrated: “The earth will never be devoid of a scholar who, when the believers added something to their religion, shall amend them in the way of truthfulness, and if they took something away from it, he shall complete and correct it for them, and if it was not so, the believers would be under the wrong impression, and they would not distinguish the false from the truth.”

Also it is narrated from Imam Amir Mu'minin (‘a) in different documents that he said: “O Allah! Verily you never leave the earth without a risen Imam and proof who is known and manifested, or is frightened into hiding, and it is in order that you don't want your reasons and proofs to be closed and stopped in society…”

In some of the quotations of this narration it is registered that Imam said: “Allah! Your earth should always have a spokesman from you for your creatures, a reason that guides them to your religion, teaches them religious knowledge in order that your reason may not be

destroyed, and the followers of your saints are not misled after you guide them by your saints. And this Imam and proof is either manifested and many people do not obey him, or he is hidden and he is looking out for an opportunity to perform his duty. And if he becomes hidden from the eyes of people while he is guiding them, indeed his knowledge and his manners will be planted imperceptibly in the hearts of believers and they will act to fulfill those matters."

And in interpretation of the word of Allah who says: "You are only frightening people, and there is a leader for every tribe," it is narrated in the narrations: "indeed the aim of the one who frightens people, is the messenger of Allah (s), and in every time there is an Imam and leader from us who guides people to what the Prophet (s) has brought from Allah."

We see in some other narrations that interprets this verse from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a): "By Allah! This position will not leave our family and it will not be taken from us."

Also it is narrated from Imam Sadiq ('a): "From the day that Allah created the earth, it has never been devoid of the proof of Allah. Whether it was known and revealed or if it was covered and hidden. And also it won't be exposed of the proof of Allah till resurrection day. And if it was not so, then Allah would not be worshipped on the earth."

It was asked from the Imam: "How can people benefit from the hidden leader and Imam?"

Imam said: "As people use the light and heat of the sun in cloudy days."

It is narrated that Imam al-Zaman said: "About the quality of the people benefiting from me in my time of absence; it is like the people profiting from the sun that is sometimes hidden from the eyes of people by clouds. Indeed I am the source of security for the inhabitants of the earth as the stars are the source of security of the inhabitants of the heaven."

The narrations and news which are registered with the same content, and indicate this meaning are numerous, and all of these narrations necessitate the time of absence, Imam al-Zaman ('a) rejects false

matters because of his grace for his believers, and guides people to the truth. And this work takes place with hidden means and factors which the tradition of "benefiting from the sun that is behind the cloud" points to because, it is clear that using manifested means and factors in the time of absence will cease to exist and if it is written in some of these narrations that the Imam will reveal the truth during his absence, it is not incompatible with the hidden means and factors…"[1]

Supporting the jurists in the time of occultation

The previously mentioned subject of the succession organization of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) during the short-term absence, such an organization was like a planning theorem for referring the nation to the just jurists in the era of the long-term absence, who were like representatives of Imam al-Zaman (‘a); in order that they act on behalf of Imam Mahdi (‘a) as a leadership organization openly and manifestly. In his letter to Ishaq ibn Ya'qoub, Imam commanded these jurists: "In the event that sometimes happens in the society, refer to the narrators of our tradition. Because they are my guidance for you, and I am the guidance of Allah for them."

The pure Imams (‘a) have previously pointed to the important role of the scholars in the long-term absence, for example, it is narrated from Imam Hadi (‘a): "If there were not some scholars after the absence of your Qaim (‘a) who led the people to him, guide them to him, defend his religion with the reasons and proofs of the Allah to save the weak servants of Allah from the trap of the devil and his refractory followers, and deliver them from the nets of the Nasebis, indeed no one remained unless he became apostatized, but those who have the reins of the hearts of the weak Shi'ahs in their hands, like a captain who takes the wheel of the ship in his hands, are the best ones in the sight of Allah."[2]

What is used from the word of Imam: "They are my proof on you and I am the proof of Allah on them," is that in fact, just jurists are a means between the Imam and the nation and this matter causes some of the scholars, especially those who obtain a high religious and social rank and have a special role in explaining the affairs and the

1. **Mafatih al-Usoul** pp. 496-497, chapter of consensus of opinions.
2. **Ihtijaj** 2:260.

mental and political guidance of the society enjoy, directly and indirectly, the help of Imam al-Zaman (‘a),especially, in the activities that effect the way of the movement of the nation and Islam. Imam al-Zaman always interferes in the affairs by these jurists to arrange these activities and guide them in the way of the interests of the Islamic nation or to remove the intense annihilating dangers from the nation of Islam. There are many narrations that divulge these interferences, and the cases that are not quoted in narrations or are not compiled in the books after the quotation, are more than the narrations that are quoted and compiled in this connection. Some of these narrations indicate the direct interference of Imam (‘a) in the propositions and some other groups show his indirect interference in the propositions by one of his guardians.[1]

3. The companions of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) during long-term occultation

It is known from some of the noble narrations that Imam Mahdi has some guardians and sincere companions during his long-term absence, and that they are from every era and time and they always meet Imam. Some of these noble narrations clearly stipulate that the number of these people is always thirty persons, Sheikh Kulaini in the book of “Kafi” and Sheikh Tusi in the book of “Absence” narrated personally from Imam Sadiq (‘a) that he said:

“The Owner of this Time should be inevitably hidden from the eyes of people and he should inevitably retire in the time of absence, and in this condition, the best house for him is Medina the pure, and because he is with thirty of his companions, he shall, therefore experience no fear.”[2]

Also Kulaini has narrated with his own document from Imam Sadiq (‘a):

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1. Ayatullah Karimi Jahromi has accumulated a set of these narrations in a book known as: “Imam Mahdi's graces to the scholars and imitation authorities.” Printed by the publication and propaganda institution 1366 Solar.
2. **Kafi** 1:340; **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 188; Halabi, **Taqrib al-Ma'arif** p. 190.

"Qaim has two absences; one of them is short and the other is prolonged, in the first absence no one is informed of the location of that Imam except special Shi'ahs, and in the prolonged absence, no one is informed of the place of that Imam but the special companions of that Imam."[1]

Also some of the noble narrations stipulate that Hazrat Khidr ('a) is also one of the people with Imam al-Zaman ('a) during his absence.[2] And maybe Imam al-Zaman ('a) receives help from these saints and companions who are in the high ranks of sincerity in order to rise for his basic responsibilities which consist of protection for the believers and taking care of them, supporting the scholars, removing dangers from the faith of people and giving direction to the revolution of the motion of events even out of the Islamic discipline, and by these acts the preliminaries of his appearance will be to prepare the necessary factors to be ready for his appearance.

4. Meeting with the believers in the long-term occultation

The method of Imam al-Zaman during the long-term absence necessitates that the meetings of Imam in this part of time be not restricted to this sparse number of sincere saints in every time. But the honour of meeting that Imam includes some people other than these sincere saints and companions, even if these meetings are not regular. The special narrations that indicate observing that Imam during the long-term absence are numerous and the number of these narrations is more than the limitation of hearsay, as, when we refer to these narrations and accumulate them, we find that in the abstract the probability of error and lies is not possible in the content of these narrations.[3]

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1. **Kafi** 1:340; **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 170; **Taqrib al-Ma'arif** p. 190.
2. **Kamal al-Din** p. 390; and narrated from it **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:480.
3. R. to **The history of the short-term absence** p. 640 onwards, **The history of long-term absence** p. 107; Sayyid Sadr has studied the matter of meeting Imam al-Zaman ('a) during the long-term absence in these two books and he has expressed in these books the lack of opposition between this matter and the order that Imam Mahdi ('a) had sent for Sheikh Samari where he commanded in it to deny those who claim observing the Imam and meeting him in the long-term absence. Mirza Noori in the fifth chapter of

Mirza Noori has mentioned more than one-hundred of these narrations in the book of Al-Najm al-Thaqib, and also in other books, such narrations have been mentioned more than this number; additionally, it is certain that there have been other meetings between the believers and Imam al-Mahdi (‘a) which are not recorded in any book and are not quoted in any source, but the news reaches us by truthful and honest sources and we know that Imam Mahdi (‘a) forges relationships all over the world and visits some of the believers of every generation, whom we know absolutely abstain from repeating and quoting such information and who keep these secrets close to their chests forever. Therefore, we can say that the unsaid and unquoted meetings of Imam al-Mahdi (‘a) with the believers exceeds the number quoted in the books.

5. Intensifying the belief in his existence

These meetings, besides the results that we mentioned, have also been called important in that they pivot the axis of penetrating faith of the Imam's existence in the people's hearts and removing any doubts that may be shadowing their faith in him, and in the way of planning for his appearance, these results are smoothing the way for the believers. Particularly, that most of these meetings were accompanied by performing some works from the side of Imam that habitually no one would naturally be able to do except the pure Imam; like subtle technical enlightenments or miracles and magnanimities that eliminated the opportunity of any doubt about his identity. Most of the time, Imam was personally instigating these meetings and even the person who attained the good fortune of meeting him, did not really expect such a thing to happen. Of course, such an honour will not be won easily by anyone; rather, after a long time, a pious man who honestly and sincerely wants Allah to prepare him for a meeting with the Imam and for attaining this goal, he does good deeds, may eventually find this meeting will be made possible for him.

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the book of al-Najm al-Thaqib, Allamah Majlesi in Bihar al-Anwar and many other scientists have studied and discussed this matter and have proved the license of meeting Imam al-Zaman (‘a) during the long-term absence.

Another quality of these encouters is that they habitually took place in order to remove the need of the visited person and for obtaining the intended result by the Imam (‘a), and frequently for observing the principles of concealment, the believer who had the honour of meeting the Imam, only realizes after the end of meeting that the person whom he had just met was Imam al-Zaman (‘a).

6. Appearance in the time of Hajj

The noble narrations stipulate the matter that every year the Sirah of Imam al-Zaman is part of the ceremonies of Hajj. It is clear that this annually important appearance, is a suitable opportunity for believers all over the world to visit the Imam and take his guidance, and even if he does not introduce himself to them, he can be informed of their states and conditions from close up and without using miraculous methods.

It is written in the noble narrations that, “The Imam appears in the ceremonies and sees people but people do not see him.”[1] Of course, it is clear that the aim of not being seen by people is their seeing but not knowing him, because the narrations stipulate the possibility of observing Imam in the time of Hajj, some of the narrations also stipulate that people see him, but they only know him as a Sayyid of the children of the messenger of Allah (s).

1. **Kafi** 1:337-239; **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 175.

CHAPTER THREE
DUTIES OF THE LONG-TERM OCCULTATION PERIOD

The narrations which are about the absence of The Owner of the Time, have made great efforts to explain the duties of Shi'ahs in the time of absence as a practical aspect which contains all of their activities in this sensitive part of the time; a part of time that is full of many seditions and the hardship of confronting with these seditions which result from the absence of Imam al-Mahdi (‘a) and the lack of easy accessibility to that Imam.

In this section we will count the most prominent of these duties more compressed, as they are expressed by the noble traditions, and then we will speak about some of their most important points in detail; the matter of “waiting for relief” which contains many of the duties of believers in the time of relief and has exposed to many false takings.

1. The most important duties of the Shi'ahs in the time of occultation

1. The first duty is giving importance to the recognition of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) and faith in his absence and certainty in the reappearance of that Imam in the heart and soul of people, and faith to the face matter that this great Imam is alive and he is informed of the acts and conditions of people, and he is waiting for preparation of the necessary conditions for his reappearance. Creating such an insight and recognition, comes up fully from the correct traditional reasons and true rational proofs.

And this duty becomes clearer to us when we have in mind the absence of Imam al-Zaman in the time of absence and the doubts, which are provoked in society because of this matter.

Such a perception of the subjects, will have a clear effect in provocation of a Muslim towards the useful reformatory activities in

the social and individual ground, and by this inner sense that you see always yourself in the presence of Imam al-Zaman and under the supervision of him, you will give him a double motive; Imam who the progress of believers makes him happy, and their lag and deviation from the reformatory and useful works, and their separation from obligation to the Islamic orders, behaviors and values will make him sad; the values that Imam is severely waiting for, for the preparation of the suitable conditions for his appearance in order that put these values on the earth in order to save the people.

In studying the narrations that spoke about the absence before its occurrence, we reach to the point that these narrations point explicitly to the same duty of Shi'ahs in the time of the absence.

In discussing the duty of waiting for the appearance of Imam al-Zaman (‘a), we will be faced with some other cases of these narrations. Additionally, there are many recommended prayers that are to be read in the era of absence, to increase the addressers motive of performing this duty and creating insight and recognition towards Imam al-Zaman firmer in the belief of believers.

For example, Sheikh Kulaini in Kafi narrates from Zurarah that Imam Sadiq (‘a) said: “Qaim will be absent… he is the same one whom all people will be waiting for, and he is the same person whose birth people will have doubts about.”

Zurarah said to that noble Imam: “Dear sir! What should I do if I experience such a day?”

Imam (‘a) replied:

“O, Zurarah! Whenever you see such a time, say this prayer: O, Allah! Make yourself known to me, and if you do not make yourself known to me, I won't know your prophet. O Allah! Make your prophet known to me, and if you do not make your prophet known to me, I won't know your reason (*hujjat*). O Allah! Make your reason known to me, and if you do not make your reason known to me, I will be misled in the way of my religion.”[1]

1. **Kafi** 1; **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 166-167; **Kamal al-Din** 2:342; **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 202.

This narration points to the idealistic foundations of faith in the Imam of the last days (‘a) and its results.

2. One of the other important duties that the noble narrations emphasize, is the strengthening of the heartfelt relationship of the time of absence with the expected Mahdi (‘a), the practical accompaniment with the great aims of that Imam, defending his ideals and the deep belief of the leadership of that great Imam. And this is the same thing that most of the arrived duties in the noble narrations emphasize; duties like the necessity of saying prayers for protecting the blessed soul of Imam al-Zaman, seeking help, requesting from Allah to make haste for his appearance, annihilating his enemies, giving alms for his health, reading Ziyarat and other duties that are mentioned in the narrations. Ayatullah Isfehani has accumulated these cases in the books of “Mekyal al-Makarem Fi Fawaed al-Duaa' LelQaim” and “Wadhaef al-Anam Fi Gheybat al-Imam.”

3. Keeping the order of Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) alive,[1] of which Imam Al-Zaman is the representative of this family. Keeping Alive the order of Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) will prove to be true by acting in the way of the pure Islam of Mohammad (s), which all of the holy household have been denied, scattering the thoughts of those great men, making their state known as they are oppressed, having love towards them, manifesting hatred towards their enemies, acting by their orders, their recommendations and the inheritance that they have left as a memorial, not referring to rebellious rulers and their orders, referring to the just jurists that the leaders of Ahl al-Bayt have put as a reason for people in the time of absence, and finally requesting help from Allah in all of these cases. As we read in the noble tradition:

“Whenever you were put in a condition that you didn't find a leader from Ahl al-Bayt to follow, seek help from Allah, act according to the custom that you were following since the past and continue to follow it, love everything that you loved in that time and hate everyone that

1. Barqi, **Mahasen** p. 173; **Kafi** 8:80; **Kamal al-Din** p. 664; in this noble tradition, Imam Baqir (‘a) has much praised those who mobilize themselves for reviving the order of Ahl al-Bayt (‘a).

you hated in that time; therefore, how often relief is close to you and obtained in your work."[1]

4. The strengthening of the dignity of faith among the society of believers and acting on two principles of "recommendation to the truth" which is the same pure Islam and "recommendation to the patience"[2] which because of the existence of many difficulties that believers are confronted with in the time of absence, is from the strict duties of believers in the era of absence. And stability in the way of chastity and purity of the household (‘a) is also of the duties of believers in the time of absence:

"A time will come to people that their Imam will be invisible to them, so, blessed is he who is firm on the way of truth…"[3]

These were the most eminent duties of the era of absence. There are other duties which are related to some events that will occur in the time of absence or are related to some signs of appearance, like: duty of helping the movements that pace in the direction of planning for the reappearance, or refraining from being affected to the sedition of the Sufyani and ordering severe precaution in the time of revealing the signs of appearance etc.

After this swift passing, we discuss the important matter of waiting for relief, the act of which is the greatest duty of the era of concealment and it contains most of the duties, which we have mentioned above.

2. The importance of awaiting the reappearance

The noble narrations, with an indescribable effort generally emphasize the greatness of the effects and results of waiting for relief; which, as the most eminent proof, include the appearance of Imam Mahdi and waiting for him.

Some of these narrations reckon such patience is a form of highest worship from the believer, as is written in the narration of Marwi from Amir Al-Mu'minin ‘Ali (‘a):

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1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 328 and narrated from it **Bihar al-Anwar** 51:136.
2. R.to the last verses of the *Surat Asr*.
3. **Kamal al-Din** p. 330; **Bihar al-Anwar** 52:145.

"The highest level of worship on the part of the believer is waiting for relief from the side of Allah."[1]

And undoubtedly the worship of the believer is preferable to the blind worship from a Muslim. Therefore, if waiting for relief has taken place with a pure aim and with the intention of devotedness, and has not been mixed with any worldly and material motive, it is the most superior worship among worships, and therefore can be one of the best ways to get close to Allah.

Imam Sadiq ('a) says about waiting for the appearance of Imam Mahdi ('a): "Happy are our Shi'ahs that they are waiting for his appearance in the time of his absence, and waiting to follow him when he appears; such men are the friends of Allah so no fear and sorrow will penetrate them."[2] Therefore, it is because of this matter that, in the interpretation of Imam Sajjad ('a), waiting for relief is the "highest relief,"[3] and the one who is waiting for relief has the merit of entering the group of divine friends.

In the interpretation of narrations, the sincere patience of a believer for the appearance of his Imam al-Zaman increases his sincerity and removes doubt from him. Imam Jawad ('a) says: "…he will be absent, and this absence has many days and its duration is prolonged; in that time, sincere people will wait for his appearance and those who doubt, they will deny him."[4]

And because waiting for relief strengthens faith in Allah in the believer, having sincerity in his way, having good opinion to the wisdom of that holy entity, and his taking care of the affairs of the servants, it is not strange that the narrations narrate from the blessed tongue of the great prophet in this manner: "the most beloved of works before Allah"[5] and "the most superior work of my nation."[6]

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1. Barqi, Mahasen and narrated from it, **Bihar al-Anwar** 52:131.
2. **Kamal al-Din** p. 357.
3. **Kamal al-Din** p. 320.
4. **Kifaiah Al-Athar** p. 279; **Kamal al-Din** p. 378.
5. Sheikh Saduq, **Khisal** 2:610; **Kamal al-Din** p. 645; **Tuhaf al-'Uqul** p. 106.
6. **Kamal al-Din** p. 644.

Waiting for relief strengthens the relationship and connection of man with Allah, and his faith to the fact that the Glorious Allah is predominant in his work, he is able to do everything, and he manages the works of his servants with wisdom and mercy. It is from the most important results that the interest of man and possibility of his journey through the steps to perfection is in it. And the aim of most of the legal orders and all of worship is nothing but this; rather, this unified faith is the condition for accepting all of them and without it, the worshipping actions of man will have no value. Waiting is the reason that causes the penetration of faith into the heart of man. We see this important effect of waiting in this manner in the noble narrations.

Imam Sadiq (‘a) says: “Aren't you eager that I inform you of the fact that Allah the Glorious does not accept any worship but because of them? … to bear witness to the fact that there is no God but Allah, Muhammad is his servant and messenger, confess to whatever Allah has commanded, to have love towards us and hate towards our enemies, submitting to us (Imams), having abstemiousness, hard effort, dignity, tranquility and waiting for Qaim (‘a)….”[1]

The noble narrations stipulate that adornment with the real waiting - according to the effects and results that we pointed to- will cause the person waiting to obtain some ranks. Among these ranks is the rank of accompaniment with Imam Mahdi (‘a), which Imam Sadiq (‘a) has pointed to in the above tradition: “Whoever wants to be happy in being put among the companions of Qaim, he should wait.”

One of the other ranks that the patient people will obtain is that they will win the reward of taking part in the Jihadi movement of Imam Mahdi (‘a). Imam Sadiq says: “Each of you that believes in this matter and he leaves the world while he is waiting, it is as if he was present in the camp of Qaim…”[2]

Furthermore, such a person will obtain the same reward as a martyr. Imam ‘Ali (‘a) says: “Whoever accepts our command and guardianship, he will be with us in Hazirah al-Qods and the one who

1. **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 200; **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:536.
2. **Kamal al-Din** p. 645.

is waiting for our order is like the one who is weltering in his blood for the sake of Allah."[1]

Moreover, such a person will attain to the highest ranks of the martyrs and fighters, and Imam Sadiq says in connection to this: "Whoever of you who is waiting for this matter and he dies, he is like the one who is present in the camp of Qaim ('a)."

The narrator says: "Imam halted and then said: "No, but he is like the one who has used a sword along with Qaim." Then he said: "No, by Allah! Such a person is only like those who have suffered from martyrdom in the treadle of the great messenger (s)" "[2].

The narrations that have spoken about the effects and advantages of waiting are numerous, and it is inferred that the difference of ranks that are mentioned for the patient ones, show the difference between believers in the circumstances of genuine waiting, and if ever the level of waiting increases, the blessed effects and advantages of it will likewise increase. This matter naturally turns to the level of laying down the circumstances of waiting, and for this reason we should know its true meaning. In the next section we will discuss this serious affair.

3. The reality of waiting

Waiting consists of a spiritual state that its result is preparation for the thing that we are waiting for, and its opposite is despair. Therefore, the harder a person waits, the preparation for reaching the desired thing will be greater. Have you ever have seen that when the time of the return of a traveller comes, the emotions you feel when the time of the persons return gets closer, your preparation increases; how often, the intensity of waiting may snatch a dream from your eyes?

As waiting has intensity and weakness from this view point, it is different also with respect to the love felt towards the expected person, and whatever the love of the waiting person to the expected one increases, his preparation for meeting with their beloved one increases and his separation will be more painful, and it is in the

1. **Khisal** p. 625 and narrated from it, **Bihar al-Anwar** 52:123.
2. Barqi, **Mahasen** 1:278-279 N 153 and narrated from it, **Bihar al-Anwar** 52:126 N 18.

manner that may cause the waiting person to neglect the matters that relates to the protection of his soul, and he never pays attention to the tormenting pains and severe calamities which he confronts in this way.

Therefore, whenever the eagerness of a believer who is waiting for his lord increases, his attempts in the way of preparing himself for the coming of his lord increases; he prepares himself by devotedness and abstemiousness, effort in the way of refining his soul, avoiding indecent behavior and adorning himself in decent behavior, in order to attain to the prosperity of meeting and observing the beauty of his lord, as this matter has occurred for many of the pious men.

Therefore, you see in the narrations that we previously quoted that the innocent Imams (‘a) emphasize greatly on refining of the soul, adornment of qualities, and continuance in the servitude of Allah. Even the narration of Abu-Basir indicates this point that attaining such prosperity is based on doing such works; when Imam Sadiq says:

“Whoever becomes happy to be among the companions of Qaim, should be waiting for him, he should always wait for him and act according to abstemiousness and make an effort to obtain decent behavior. Therefore, if such a person dies before the insurrection of Qaim, there will be a reward and remuneration for him as if he was present in the time of appearance of Qaim…”

There is no doubt that whenever a believer waits more anxiously, his rank, position, and the reward will be greater from Allah.”[1]

Waiting means: waiting for the relief of the affair of the family of Muhammad (‘a) in every moment and asking for the day of the appearance of the powerful government and apparent kingdom of Mahdi of the family of Muhammad (s). The day when the earth will be filled with justice and the stable religion overcoming all of the religions as the exalted Allah has informed his great messenger and has promised it, and he has even given the glad tidings to all the prophets and nations that such a day will come, and in this day people

1. **Mekyal al-Makarem** 2:152-153.

won't worship anyone but the exalted Allah and there will be nothing of religion that is hidden behind the veil for fear of anyone[1]."

Therefore, waiting contains a heartfelt state, which rises from the idealistic principles of the Shi'ah's belief to the certainty of the appearance of the promised Mahdi and certainty of the goals, the prophet's missions, and the hopes and wishes of the Imam. This heartfelt state also culminates in the motivation of practical movements, which revolve round the axis of preparation for the appearance of the expected. And it is for this reason that the noble narrations emphasize the necessity of knowing Imam Mahdi ('a), and the certainty of his appearance; a true insight based on idealistic reasons.

According to what we said: if waiting does not have three synchronous elements, it is not truthful: the idealistic element, the spiritual element, and the behavioristic element, and without these three elements, waiting will no more keep its true religious meaning and it will change to a kind of selfish inattention that is firm on the same logic of the companions of Moses ('a) who said:

﴿فَٱذۡهَبۡ أَنتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَٰتِلَآ إِنَّا هَٰهُنَا قَٰعِدُونَ﴾

"So, you and your Allah go and fight and we will be waiting here…"[2]

And the result of such belief is only expecting goodness for human beings without performing any positive action.[3]

Therefore, we observe the narrations that have discussed the wait and we see that they have emphasized this point: knowing of Imam Mahdi ('a) must penetrate the heart and soul of the believers as a manifestation of the believers' patience, the continuous relationship should take root in their hearts, and they should practically believe in the guardianship of the Imam and grasp his full religion. Every believer should account himself as one of the companions of the Imam, and adorn himself to all of the Jihadi, idealistic and moral characteristics which are necessary for taking part in the great

1. **Al-Najm al-Thaqib** p. 428; printed by Islamic scientific.
2. *Surat al-Maidah, 5:24.*
3. **The history of the long-term absence** p. 342.

insurrection of Imam al-Zaman (‘a), otherwise, he won't be the true patient person.

Waiting for relief includes two kinds: the waiting that is useful, movable, contains engagement, and is a kind of worship and even the most superior of worships, and another one is a kind of waiting that is destructing, prohibiting, paralyzing and is a kind of “knowing everything allowable.” … These two kinds of waiting are due to two types of takings from the great historical appearance of the promised Mahdi (‘a)… the taking of people from Mahdawiyyat, insurrection and the promised revolution is a kind of taking that has merely a detonative nature; it only results from the spreading of the oppressions, unjust discriminations, strangulations, unjust partialities and corruptions… then this explosion takes place and the hidden hand comes out from the sleeve to save the truth… then, the best help in acceleration of the appearance and the best form of waiting is spreading the corruption…

The verses show that the appearance of the promised Mahdi (‘a) is a ring of the rings of the fight of truthful people with the false that will finally culminate in the victory of the truthful; the participating of a person in this prosperity is based on the matter that he will be in the group of truthful ones…

The narrations also show that with the appearance of al-Mahdi (‘a), each of the prosperous and vicious people come to the conclusion of their actions. It is not said that there is no prosperous man and only the vicious reach the furthest end of adversity. The Islamic narrations speak about an agile group who join the Imam as soon as he appears… but if supposedly the truthful ones are quantitatively worthy of attention, they are the worthiest of the believers qualitatively and are in the same rank with the companions of the master of martyrs (‘a). According to the Islamic narrations, in the prelude of the appearance and insurrection of the Imam, a chain of other insurrections will take place from the side of truthful ones… some of the Islamic narrations speak about a true government that will continue until the insurrection of Mahdi (‘a).[1]

1. Shahid Murtada Mutahari, the insurrection and revolution of **Mahdi plus Shahid** pp. 61-68 with summarization.

From what was mentioned, it becomes clear that the desired legal waiting has conditions, and it won't be certain without these conditions, and the certainty of these conditions is from the most important duties of the believers in the era of absence. The noble narrations have been mentioned them. Imam Sajjad has accumulated these conditions in one tradition and has said: verily those who live in the time of his absence, those who believe his Imamate, and those who are waiting for his appearance, they are superior that the people of all time, because the exalted Allah grants them with a kind of comprehension and wisdom that in their mind the time of absence is not different with the time of appearance and objective observing and he (Allah) has put them on that time as the fighters that have used a sword in the control of the messenger of Allah (s). They are forming the true devoted men and they are our real Shi'ahs who summon people to the religion of Allah openly and in secret.[1]

4. The conditions of waiting

According this noble tradition and the explanations that we have expressed before, the conditions of waiting can be summarized in the following points, which in the meantime it clears the practical method that by following it, the believer changes to a real patient person:

1. Penetration of insight and knowing Imam Mahdi (‘a), belief to the Imamate of that Imam, the fact that he is performing the responsibilities of the position of Imamate from behind the curtain of absence, having knowledge about the historical role of that Imam and its dimensions and necessities and also the role of believers in front of that Imam and making their relationship firm with him, and furthermore, faith in this matter that the appearance of that Imam may take place in any time; this faith causes believer to be ready for his appearance in every time and to prepare himself to participate in his insurrection.

For obtaining this level of preparation that originates from waiting sincerely, the believer should be adorned to other qualities that Imam Sajjad has pointed out in a noble narration. And these qualities form the other conditions of the certainty of the concept of waiting in the

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 319.

ground of action, which we will discuss in expressing the next conditions.

2. Having sincerity in performing the different necessities of waiting and trimming them of all of the grudges and all of the physical and material taints; it means that the believer should perform all of these affairs only for the satisfaction of Allah and with the aim of devotedness and attempt in the way of obtaining the satisfaction of that holy entity. In this case, waiting will become the most superior worship. In this regard Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Isfehani specifies that: "The certainty of this pure aim, for acting to the duty of waiting is necessary. In any case, creating this state and appearing of this condition has a direct relationship with the spiritual preparation for helping Imam al-Zaman (‘a) in the time of his reappearance; because the lack of this condition, takes away the necessary merit for bearing hardships in the way of helping Imam (‘a) for his great reformatory and Jihadi commission.

3. Polishing of the soul and the full preparation of the self for helping Imam (‘a) by truly taking hold of the Qur'an and Ahl al-Bayt and endowing himself with the behavior of Thaqalayn in order to become from the true companions of the Imam and become the meaning of this item of the noble narration of Imam Sajjad (‘a) that says*:* "They are from our true Shi'ahs." And he should have the necessary divine and Jihadi conditions from the viewpoint of personality for helping Imam al-Zaman (‘a) in the way of certainty of the divine aims of that Imam, and this is the same planning for the appearance in individualistic view point.

4. Being socially active in the way of planning for the appearance of Imam Mahdi (‘a) from the way of inviting people to the religion of Allah, training the companions of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and giving hope to people for the great movement of that Imam. We see also in the noble narration of Imam Sajjad (‘a) the description of the waiting persons: "They are those who summon people to the religion of Allah openly and in secret."

The narration emphasizes this subject fully that the patient people should, in spite of all problems, always be firm on their preliminary movement for the appearance of Imam Mahdi (‘a). If the conditions were favorable, they should embark openly to do this, otherwise, they

should embark to it in secret, and the excuse of the difficulty of the conditions never will be a justification to avoid doing this duty.

According to what we mentioned so far, it becomes clear that, in spite of difficulty of conditions and the necessity of devotion in its way, true waiting contains a useful and permanent movement and social and individual preparation for the appearance of the expected saviour. Imam Khomeini (may he rest in peace) said in the last part of the message that he issued in the last 15th of Sha'ban before he left this world on the occasion of the birthday of Imam Mahdi (‘a): “Greetings to him, greetings to his true waiting men, greetings to his absence and his appearance, greetings to those who understand the full meaning of his appearance and overflow of the cup of his insight and his guidance. Greetings to the great nation of Iran who smoothed the way for his reappearance with devotion, excessive generosity and martyrdom…”[1]

5. Waiting and the immediate preparation for appearance

As scholars have verified the necessity of this waiting by relying on the narrations that have been commanded the necessity of waiting for the divine relief generally or waiting for the Mahdawi relief especially, they (scholars) have verified also by relying on the same narrations about the necessity of permanent preparation for the occurrence of the appearance in every time. The martyr Sayyid Muhammad Sadr (may he rest in peace) says: “Among the narrations that denote the necessity of the duties in the time of absence, there are narrations that denote the necessity of immediate waiting and preparation for the immediate appearance in every time that we have explained previously regarding this subject.”[2]

Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Isfehani, after narrating a set of narrations where all of them denote the necessity of immediate patience, says: “The aim of there being a state waiting in every time of the night and morning is this that this blessed affair may take place at any time and any era, and the patient person should always have the necessary preparation for this important affair; the affair that base on the

1. **Sahifeh Noor** 21:107.
2. **The history of long-term absence** p. 427.

command of the wise and prudent Allah may take place in any year, month, and day. Therefore it is necessary for the people of all classes to be waiting for its event."[1]

Shahid Sayyid Muhammad Sadr, (may he rest in peace) by relying on the agreement of all Muslims in the matter of certainty of the appearance of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and the hearsay of narrations that denote it, emphasizes on the word of Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Isfehani (in the text that we quoted from him) that was based on the necessity of inclusion of this wait on all Muslims: the hearsay of narrations is in a manner that their certainty is proved to everyone, and it blocks the way of any pretext before Allah for denying them; so, after being certain that the happening of this affair depends only on divine will and decree and no one has an opinion in this matter but him, we say that the great movement of Mahdawi may start for performing the command of the exalted Allah any day, because it is clear that there is no limitation of time for the will of Allah. Therefore, there is no difference between the view of Shi'ah and non-Shi'ah in this matter that the appearance may take place in every moment by the will and command of the exalted Allah. Because according to the view point of Shi'ahs, the exalted Allah can grant the permission of appearance to Imam Mahdi after his absence whenever he wills, and according to the attitude of those who say Mahdi is not yet born and he will bear in the future and he will rise in arms, it can be probable that Imam Mahdi is born is some past time by the will of the exalted Allah and it is probable in every moment that the command for his insurrection be issue by the exalted Allah. This is a probability that always can occur.[2] Therefore, in the continuation of his discussion, he has reasoned by this proof on the necessity of being waiting for all of those who believe to the existence of saviour and are from other religions.

After proving the immediate necessity of waiting and the probability of the occurrence of appearance in any era, there remains one matter and that is the matter of signs of appearance that are written in the narrations, and the narrations have stipulated that these signs will happen before the occurrence of the reappearance. Now it should be

1. **Mekyal Al-Makarem** 2:158-159.
2. **The history of long-term absence** pp. 341-342.

clear that whether there is conflict around the nature of these signs and the matter of immediate necessity and the permanent probability of appearance or not?

The answer is no, there is no such conflict. Because with due to the fact that the certain signs are a part of the appearance, the time of their happening will be very close to the time of appearance, and waiting for these signs is in fact waiting for the appearance. But about obtaining the conditions of appearance and coming together the suitable conditions for that, there is this probability that may Allah allow these conditions to occur in every era.

Shahid Sayyid Muhammad Sadr (may he rest in peace) writes: "The certain signs of appearance may appear in every time, and it is probable that a little time after the appearance of the signs, the appearance of Imam Mahdi will happen too." The probability of certainty and completion of the conditions of appearance exists in every time too, and as we said: the existence of the same probability in the thought of every person is enough for creating the suitable spiritual space for the immediate waiting.[1]

This is the same spiritual space that creates the necessary motive for the fast movement of believers in the way of preparing the necessary conditions for helping their Imam of the time; the conditions that prepare with self-polishing, refining of the soul, true training and being adorned with the qualities of the companions of Mahdi ('a).

For completing the discussion of the necessity of waiting which is from the most important necessaries of the era of absence, it is necessary to point to the matter of the respect for being hopelessness of the appearance which it comes from a Qur'anic and vulgar reason and it forms itself as one of the reasons of necessity of waiting. Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Isfehani, (may he rest in peace), has discussed this subject in detail. He has mentioned the legal texts that relate to it, he has expressed the denotation of them and the orders that is deduced of these texts, he has discussed various kinds of despairs that are imagined regarding the appearance of Imam Mahdi ('a), and has concluded that, generally being in despair of the appearance of that Imam is unlawful, because all of Muslims

1. **The history of long-term absence** pp. 362-363.

unanimously know it certain. He also has proved that being in despair from the occurrence of appearance in a specified time, or being despair of the nearness of appearance is also unlawful.[1]

1. **Mekyal al-Makarem** 2:157-162.

SECTION FIVE

Chapter One
The signs of appearance of Imam Mahdi (‘a)

Chapter Two
The Sirah of Imam Mahdi (‘a) in the time of appearance

Chapter Three
A ray of the narrations of Imam Mahdi (‘a)

CHAPTER ONE
THE SIGNS OF APPEARANCE
OF IMAM MAHDI (AS)

1. Some points about the signs of appearance

In discussing the duties of believers in the time of absence of Imam (‘a), we know that the blessed narrations command the believers to wait for the reappearance and to have permanent preparation for it, and this is a training duty in order to encourage them to make an effort in the way of obtaining the permanent and necessary aptitude for helping that Imam in the time of appearance.

But beside this strict command, the narrations have narrated a set of events as the sign of appearance of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) in order that by these signs, the believers find guidance for strengthening the beliefs, hurrying in preparation for helping Imam, and taking part in accomplishing his great reformatory commission.

The agreement between these two groups of narrations is that the command to wait and prepare in all of states depends on the possibility of the appearance in any that Allah wills, and when we speak about the will of Allah, it is possible that the occurrence of these signs happen before the time or some of them may be cancelled because of the divine wisdom in managing the affair of servants. Because, it is possible that Allah knows the truth of their claim in being prepared to help the Imam, or maybe the aim of immediate waiting for the reappearance is waiting for the occurrence of the mentioned signs, because occurring of these signs is as proclaiming for the appearance of Imam (‘a).

With this method, both the intended results of the order to the necessity of permanent preparation for the appearance of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and the intended results of expressing the signs of appearance obtain which is accelerating in preparation of believers

and in special cases act to the necessaries that are taken into account for some of the special signs.

2. The certain and non-certain signs

The noble traditions divide the signs of appearance of Imam al-Zaman (‘a) into two main parts.

The first part includes the signs that certainly will happen, and the second part includes the non-certain signs, and these signs will happen only when the divine wisdom necessitates. Some of these signs are close to the time of appearance and some of them will occur very many years before its occurrence.

3. The symbolic language in the narrations that relate to the signs

Since the noble narrations have spoken about many of the signs of appearance, knowing and analyzing of them is necessary for the subtle recognition of them. Also, it is worthy to accumulate whatever is registered in these narrations about these signs and their details and it is studied with delay and with full precision far from the previous beliefs in order that we can obtain their true evidence and avoid being captured in the net of pre-judgments and haste comparisons that separate man from the main aim. Especially that the symbolic language naturally conforms on more than one external evidence. And this is against the aim of pure Imams about expressing them.

Also it is necessary to point to this hint that some of the narrations about the signs of the reappearance have been determined clearly or indirectly through special duties for the believers in the frontier of those signs which we should make efforts to recognize until we obtain their intended results.

And since the signs of appearance relate to hidden matters, they have been exposed to forging and alteration during the time, and it is worthy that first we give the sufficient precision to this aspect until the true news is distinct from the forged and false news. Besides, there is another important case in this connection and that is the existence of a set of signs that have been registered in dispatched narrations (without connected document) or narrations that have not any documents, but after the issuance of narration and registering

them in the books, the content of those narrations has occurred in the located texts of history and the reality of history has verified them, and in spite of the fact that these narrations have not any written records, this is the best reason for legitimacy of narrations. Because giving news about what that has not yet occurred, shows the issuance of the news by the source of divine inspiration.

4. The most eminent signs of appearance

Deliberating the signs of appearance, needs a long discussion and it cannot be inserted as a short discussion, therefore, after the introduction that we expressed for this topic, we will be content with the quotation of Sheikh Mufid (may he rest in peace), who has summarized the narrations of this chapter with due attention to the point that there are other narrations that he has not mentioned.

Sheikh Mufid says: There are narrations that have expressed the signs of insurrection of Imam Mahdi (‘a) and the events that will happen before it. Among those signs:

- The insurrection of Sufyani;

- Killing of Hasani;

- The disputing of Bani 'Abbas for the sovereignty of the world;

- Un-natural eclipsing of the sun on the 15th of Ramadhan and un-natural lunar eclipsing at the end of Ramadhan;

- Manifesting the event of Khasf in Baydae[1] and in the west and east;

- Motionlessness of the sun from the noon till the evening and its rising from the west;

- Killing of the Pure Soul with seventy of his companions in Kufa;

- Beheading of a Hashemi man between the Element and the Place (in Masjed al-Haram);

- Destruction of the fence of Kufa;

- Appearing of the black flags from Khorasan;

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1. Khasf means swallowing people by earth. It is said that the army of Sufiani will be affected with Khasf in Baida which is a region between Mecca near Zolholayfah.

- The insurrection of Yamani, appearing as a western man in Egypt and him conquering Shamat;

- Landing of the Turks in the island;

- Landing of the Romans in Ramleh;

- Appearance of a luminous star in the east that shines like moon and then curves in such a manner that its two ends touch each other;

- Appearance of a kind of redness in the sky, which will be spread all over the horizons;

- Appearance of a fire in the east which will be revealed in a linear form and will remain in the sky for three or seven days;

- Arabs will tear the reins and come out of the sovereignty of non-Arabs and they will conquer the non-Arab cities;

- Killing of the Prince of Egypt by Egyptians;

- Destruction of Sham and difference of three flags in it;

- Entering of the army of Qais and Arabs into Egypt and the entering of the army of Kendah into Khorasan;

- Entering of some riders from the west, until they reach to the fence of Hirah, and appearance of the black flags from the east towards it;

- Overflowing of the river of Forat in a manner that its water surrounds the alleys of Kufa;

- Appearance of sixty liars who all claim prophet hood;

- The insurrection of twelve persons from the family of AbiTaleb who all claim Imamate;

- Burning of a great man from the Shi'ahs of Bani-'Abbas in a place between Jalola' and Khaneqeyn;

- Bridging in Medina al-Salam towards Karkh and rising of a black wind in that city in the beginning of the day and occurrence of an earthquake, which swallows a great part of the city;

- A fear that surrounds the people of Iraq and spreading of death in Iraq and decrease of souls, properties and fruits;

- Appearing of grass hoppers timely and untimely in a manner that they destroy the cultivation and cereals;

- Decreasing of the amount of the agricultural products of people;

- Quarrel between two groups of non-Arabs, which will culminate in much blood-shed among them.

- Disobedience of slaves to their masters and killing them;

- Metamorphosing of a tribe of innovators into pigs and monkeys;

- Predominating of slaves over the lands of their masters;

- Coming of a voice from the sky which all of the people of earth will hear in their own language;

- A chest and face that will be seen by people in the sky, in the fountain of the sun;

- Dead people shall rise from their graves to return to the world and visit their relatives.

Then, as it is written in the narrations, these signs will end with twenty four consecutive days of rain, which the earth will be revived after death and its blessings will be manifested, after that any disagreements will be removed of those who believe in the truth and those who are from the Shi'ahs of al-Mahdi, and they will understand that it is the time for the appearance of that Imam in Mecca, and they will move towards Mecca to help him.

Of course, some of these events are certain and some other are due to some conditions, and Allah is wiser to know what will happen. We only mentioned these matters because they are registered in valid books and principles and because they were narrated by the infallible Imams (‘a), and we will ask grace and help from Allah.[1]

The Termination of the reasons for the occultation

Besides the signs that the noble narrations have stipulated, we can conclude from these narrations that one of the important signs of the appearance of Imam Mahdi (‘a) is eliminating the factors and causes that have culminated in his absence, and the preparation of the

1. Sheikh Mufid, **Irshad** 2:368-370.

conditions for Imam's taking action for performing his great reformatory commission.

Among them are:

1. Completing the process of testing and choosing the believers and accumulating the necessary number of faithful companions in different positions that we pointed to while discussing the reasons of absence; the companions who are of a high position and have the necessary political merits for assisting Imam Mahdi (‘a) in establishing the worldly and Islamic government of justice and managing its different matters, and before it, they have the merit of managing the movement that is against blasphemy, polytheism and rebellious servitude and to fully eliminate them.

And maybe people who reach this rank are those whose number in the noble narration is 313 as the number of the companions of Badr, and these have great qualities like faith and attaining the right to the insight of Allah. In the narrations these people, from the view point of the intensity of worshipping Allah and having sincerity for the holy entity of Allah, are referred to as ‘ worshippers and monks or saints of the night', and from the view point of bravery and their high merit of Jihad, they are referred to as ‘lions of the day', and because of the merit of having high management they are entitled to be just rulers,[1] and about their other qualities it is this group of people are from the administrative and leadership of Imam (‘a) in the time of his appearance before and after establishing the worldly just government.

2. Preparation of the wide Islamic bases, which are ready to have a positive compatibility with the aims of the great Mahdawi movement although they have different levels from the viewpoint of the quality of practical help to the movement.[2]

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1. **'Iqid al-Durr** p. 123; **Ithbat al-Hudat** p. 494-518; Ibn Hemad, **Al-Malahem walfitan** p. 95; Tabari Imami, **Dalail al-Imamah** pp. 248-249; **Helyah al-Oliae** 6:123; **Mustadrak Hakem** 4:554; **Yanabi'a al-Mawadah** p. 512; **Kamal al-Din** p. 673; **Ikhtisas** of Sheikh Mufid p. 26; and traditions in praising the helpers and companions of Imam Mahdi (‘a) are numerous.
2. R. to the explanations Of Shahid Sayyid Muhammad Sadr (May he rest in peace) about the levels of these bases: **the history of long-term absence** p. 247 onwards.

What causes the existence of this state is that the legitimacy and preference of the religion of the Ahl al-Bayt of the prophet who has appointed Imam al-Mahdi as their successor, becomes revealed and also the doubts that have been provoked against this religion during Islamic history, reveal and it becomes clear that it is only this school that is the agent of the pure Islam.

The noble narrations discuss the planning of the movement for the insurrection of the Mahdawi and its role in presenting the trimmed face of the religion of Ahl al-Bayt and its pure Islamic sciences in the area of the world of Islam and the world in general have pointed to the true and noble face of Islam.[1]

This preliminary movement, which the noble narrations emphasize before the appearance of Mahdawi, in presenting the trimmed picture of Islam to the world, causes the rising of Islam in the world as the replaced civilization for the salvation of man and receiving Islam gladly, increases the circle of the Islamic society; - a matter that today we are observing rarely- this matter causes that the doors of positive compatibility with the Mahdawi movement to open to the non-Islamic nations too; especially since they have been experienced other schools and other mental and political conducts, and they have practically felt their disability in certainty of the desired prosperity of man and bringing up many material and spiritual crises because of them; crises that they are also griping with today. This matter causes the nations of the world to search for a replacement out of the schools and conducts that they have known so far. The noble narrations stipulate that the government of the Mahdawis is the last government on the earth and we have mentioned these group of narrations in the sections that relates to the means and causes of absence, and they point exactly to this matter.

3. One of the other preliminaries is preparing the advanced communicational devices that prepare the possibility of the public knowing of facts and consequently delivering the truth to all people, and it also reveals all the falseness and uselessness of other schools

1. **Bihar al-Anwar** 60:213, narrated from: Hasan Muhammad Qumi, **The history of Qum** S 3, N 22-23; and narrated from it, **Muntakheb al-Athar** p. 263 and 443.

and the superiority and legitimacy of the Islamic mission of which Imam Mahdi (‘a) is its pioneer. Therefore, people who were related to other schools during the history, accept the mental conduct and aims of Islam, of which Imam Mahdi (‘a) is its bearer and they join to the line the Imam's companions in a practical reality. The narrations that have mentioned the means of absence, have reminded about this phenomenon by the title coming out of “the deposits of Allah”, that is to say, coming out of the pious deposits of Allah from the lineage of the unbelievers.

CHAPTER TWO
THE SIRAH OF IMAM MAHDI (AS) IN THE TIME OF APPEARANCE

A set of blessed narrations are registered about expressing the time of his reappearance, the conducts that happen during this time, the methods of Imam Mahdi (‘a) at the time of appearance, and the actions that Allah will accomplish by this Imam.

These narrations have been recounted in valid books deemed reliable by different Islamic sects, and among them are narrations that have precise accurate documentation. Because this book does not have the scope to go into, analyze and investigate all of them, we have summarized the most eminent contents of those narrations under brief headings sufficient to the amount. In most of the cases, we do not mention the text of the narrations in order that, in cases where more detail is needed, the honorable reader refers himself to the sources. In presenting this discussion, we first express the Qur'anic verses in this connection which have spoken about the characteristics of the time of the appearance and the affairs that Allah will accomplish on that day through his guardian, the expected Mahdi (‘a).

These texts that have spoken about the time of appearance indicate that the government of Mahdawi is the most eminent piece of evidence for one of the most important aims of the prophetic mission of all prophets, and the holy Qur'an presents such picture too.

1. The characteristics of Mahdawi's government in the Qur'an

Completing of divine light and Islam obtaining predominance over all religions

The holy Qur'an has stipulated this matter in three blessed Surahs:

A.

﴿يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُطْفِـُٔوا۟ نُورَ ٱللَّهِ بِأَفْوَٰهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى ٱللَّهُ إِلَّآ أَن يُتِمَّ نُورَهُۥ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ ٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ هُوَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُۥ بِٱلْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ ٱلْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُۥ عَلَى ٱلدِّينِ كُلِّهِۦ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ ٱلْمُشْرِكُونَ﴾

"They want to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths; but Allah wants to complete his light even though the unbelievers detest it! He is the one that sent His messenger with guidance and with the religion of truth, in order that give it predominance over all of the religions, no matter how the unbelievers dislike this matter."[1]

B.

﴿يُرِيدُونَ لِيُطْفِـُٔوا۟ نُورَ ٱللَّهِ بِأَفْوَٰهِهِمْ وَٱللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِۦ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ ٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ ﴿٨﴾ هُوَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُۥ بِٱلْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ ٱلْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُۥ عَلَى ٱلدِّينِ كُلِّهِۦ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ ٱلْمُشْرِكُونَ﴾

*"They want to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths; but Allah will complete his light no matter how the disbelievers dislike it! * he is the one that sent his messenger with guidance and with the religion of truth, in order that give it predominance over all of the religions, even though the polytheists dislike it."*[2]

1. *Surat al-Tawbah, 9:32-33.*
2. *Surat al- Saff, 61:8-9.*

C.

﴿هُوَ ٱلَّذِیٓ أَرۡسَلَ رَسُولَهُۥ بِٱلۡهُدَىٰ وَدِینِ ٱلۡحَقِّ لِیُظۡهِرَهُۥ عَلَى ٱلدِّینِ كُلِّهِۦۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِٱللَّهِ شَهِیدًا﴾

"He is the one who sent his messenger with guidance and with the religion of truth, in order that give it victory over all of the religions; and it is sufficient that Allah is the witness of this matter."[1]

The commentators of different Islamic interpretations have stipulated that this certain-happening promise will occur only in the time of the promised Mahdi; when Islam gains predominance over all the religions and it spreads from east to west, [2] and the worldly government of Islam establishes; because the aim of the word "manifesting" in the Qur'anic verses is victory and domination, and it does not mean that it gains victory merely by the reasons in the theoretical arena, because such a victory has always been prepared for Islam and the glad tidings of Allah will accrue to the matter that it will happen in the future. Fakhr Razi has reasoned to this matter in his commentary too.[3]

The succession of the pious believer

A.

﴿وَلَقَدۡ كَتَبۡنَا فِی ٱلزَّبُورِ مِنۢ بَعۡدِ ٱلذِّكۡرِ أَنَّ ٱلۡأَرۡضَ یَرِثُهَا عِبَادِیَ ٱلصَّـٰلِحُونَ﴾

"And in fact, we wrote in the Old Testament and after that we wrote in Psalms that our good servants would inherit the earth."[4]

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1. *Surat al- Fath, 48:28.*
2. **Commentary of Qurtabi** 8:12; **the big commentary** 16:40; the narrations from Ahl al-Bayt ('a) also about the allocation of certainty of this promise to the time of the promised Mahdi are numerous.
3. **The Great commentary** 16:40.
4. *Surat Anbiya, 21:105.*

B.

﴿وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مِنكُمۡ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ لَيَسۡتَخۡلِفَنَّهُمۡ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ كَمَا ٱسۡتَخۡلَفَ ٱلَّذِينَ مِن قَبۡلِهِمۡ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمۡ دِينَهُمُ ٱلَّذِي ٱرۡتَضَىٰ لَهُمۡ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّنۢ بَعۡدِ خَوۡفِهِمۡ أَمۡنٗاۚ يَعۡبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشۡرِكُونَ بِي شَيۡـٔٗاۚ وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعۡدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡفَٰسِقُونَ﴾

"*Allah has promised to those of you that have believed and have done good deeds that He will surely grant them succession on the earth; as he made as his successors those who were before them, and he will establish for them the religion that is good for them and is useful for them, he will change their fear to security, [until] you worship me and do not put for me any partner, and anyone who leads into blasphemy; they are the corrupted ones."*[1]

C.

﴿ٱلَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّٰهُمۡ فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ أَقَامُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَوُاْ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَأَمَرُواْ بِٱلۡمَعۡرُوفِ وَنَهَوۡاْ عَنِ ٱلۡمُنكَرِۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَٰقِبَةُ ٱلۡأُمُورِ﴾

"Those who when we grant them life on earth, they perform prayer and give charity (zakat) and command people to do good deeds and prohibit them from indecent deeds, and the end of their life return to Allah."[2]

The first blessed verse informs that the certain divine decree is the reward of being bound over the line of faith and goodness-besides the otherworldly reward, a worldly reward that is manifested with the inheritance of the earth and governing over it; where the end of work always belongs to the virtuous men in this world and the world

1. *Surat al-Noor, 24:55.*
2. *Surat Hajj, 22:41.*

hereafter.[1] The second verse stipulates that those whom Allah will certainly put as his successors on earth, they are those Muslims who have believed and have done good deeds; those who are oppressed in the earth and are deprived of freely worshipping Allah. The above-mentioned verse emphasizes this point that these people submit to the religion that Allah has appointed for them. As by thinking over these two verses, it can be find that both of them discuss the era of Imam Mahdi's (‘a) appearance.[2]

Creating a just unified society

By referring to what we discussed, it becomes clear that one of the characteristics of the era of the promised Mahdi (‘a) is that the reins of the human society will be put fully in the hands of the pious men; those who are oppressed on this earth and are the agents of the pure Islam and who perform the prayer and pay zakat, order to what is good and prohibit people from what is unlawful, because the exalted Allah gives them power and sovereignty over the earth; that is to say, they establish a pure and unified society that only Allah is worshiped in it in full security and there is no fear from any unbeliever and hypocrite in it. Therefore, they prepare all conditions that are necessary for the certainty of the reality of worshipping Allah with human perfection under its shadow. In such a time, there will remain no excuse and reason for those who choose the way of blasphemy and according to the interpretation of the verse: *“they are the corrupted ones.”* Because, in spite of preparing all the necessary conditions for going down the right path, they have returned from it and it is one of the other conditions of the era of the expected Mahdi (‘a), and explains the news that has been spoken from the intensity of the behavior of Imam with deviated persons.

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1. **The commentary of al-Mizan** 14:329-331.
2. The late Allameh Tabatabai (may he rest in peace) has made a thorough analysis in the commentary of Al-Mizan- other speeches that the commentators have written about this matter and he has proved that these suggestions are not in accordance with the verse reasons and that we cannot interpret them except to the government of Mahdawi. R.to **Al-Mizan** 15:151-157.

Fulfilling the intended aim from the creation of mankind

The exalted Allah says:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

"I didn't create the human and the genii except to worship me."[1]

This noble verse restricts the aim of the creation of man in worshipping Allah, the exalted,[2] this is the same thing that will be certain socially and individually in the most perfect form under the shadow of the government of the promised Mahdi ('a).

Shahid Sayyid Muhammad Sadr (may he rest in peace) has introduced an idealistic and interpretational discussion, and has relied on the same verse to provide the certainty of the appearance of the government of al-Mahdi ('a).[3] And since the violation of creature from the aim of his creation is impossible, the certainty of this aim is a sure affair. The aforesaid verse has also spoken in the connection of this aim from mankind, because true worship in the arena of society and individuals will be certain in the whole of this kind and this is a matter that has not been proved to be true during the history of the life of man on earth, that is to say, from the time that the first man descended on this Earth until now. Therefore, we should believe that surely this matter would be certain in the future; in a divine government that creates a unified and a pious society, which worships Allah; the only God, who has no partner. This is the same government of the Mahdawi that the verses of the holy Qur'an have pointed to and the quoted noble narrations that we spoke about before from the two sects, stipulate them.

Eradicating apostasy from the religion of Allah

The exalted Allah says:

1. *Surat Dhaariat, 51:56.*
2. **The commentary of al-Mizan** 18:386-389.
3. **The history of long-term absence** p. 233 onwards.

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ مَن يَرۡتَدَّ مِنكُمۡ عَن دِينِهِۦ فَسَوۡفَ يَأۡتِي ٱللَّهُ بِقَوۡمٖ يُحِبُّهُمۡ وَيُحِبُّونَهُۥٓ أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى ٱلۡكَٰفِرِينَ يُجَٰهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوۡمَةَ لَآئِمٖۚ ذَٰلِكَ فَضۡلُ ٱللَّهِ يُؤۡتِيهِ مَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

"O, those who have believed each of you that apostatizes of his religion, soon, Allah will bring another group that He loves and who love Him. [they] are humble with the pious men and are fierce to the unbelievers. They perform Jihad in the way of Allah and they do not fear the accusations of those who blame. This is the grace of Allah. He gives it to anyone whom He wants, and Allah is the knowledgeable one that makes relief."[1]

The late Allamah Tabatabai in order to prove that this verse refers to the era of Mahdawi's appearance, and the meaning of apostasy from the religion of Allah in this verse is keeping the outward appearances of Islam while simultaneously having an interest in the Jews and following them in their lifestyles - a condition which we are observing today - has introduced a Qur'anic narrative, and interpretational discussion stating that this is the same apostasy that the preceding verses have prohibited; the verses speak about the deviation that involves the world of Islam before the victory of Mahdi ('a).[2]

Therefore, one of the qualities of the era of the Mahdawi government is eradicating both apostasy from the religion of Allah as well the emulation the Jews' manner of living, and the returning Muslims to the Islamic way in various situations of life, and this is exactly in conformity with other characteristics of the Mahdawi era which the previous verses pointed to.

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1. *Surat Maidah, 5:54.*
2. The commentary of **Al-Mizan** 5:366-400, and R.B the commentary of sheikh As'ad Biyuz al-Tamimi about the same verses in the book **decline of Israel a certain Quranic matter** pp. 120-124.

2. The date of Imam Mahdi's appearance

The noble narrations say that Imam Mahdi (‘a) will appear in one of the odd lunar years[1] and on Friday,[2] and according to what has been written in other narrations, the departure of the Imam will take place on a Saturday, the tenth of Muharram,[3] and perhaps we can conclude from these two dates that the appearance of the Imam is on Friday, he delivers a speech in Masjed al-Haram and his departure to Kufa is on a Saturday.

3. The place of appearance and the beginning of insurrection of Imam (‘a)

A group of narrations claim that the beginning of the appearance of that Imam takes place from Medina the Luminous and the proclaiming of his insurrection is in the honorable Mecca and in Masjed al-Haram[4] he summons people to himself while delivering an important concise sermon. The text of this sermon has been narrated from Imam Muhammad Baqir (‘a) in a long narration which was expressed in relation to the appearance of his honorable grandchild Imam
Mahdi (‘a). In part of this narration he said:

“…then he reaches the place of Ibrahim and he performs two Rak'ats of prayer, after which he swears to Allah in front of the people about his right, and says:

O people! We ask help against those who allowed us to be oppressed and took our right from us. Whoever began to reason about us regarding Allah, I am more deserving of Allah than all people, whoever began to reason about us about Adam, I am more deserving of Adam than all of the people, whoever began to reason about us

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1. Irshad of **Sheikh Mufid** 2:379 and narrated from it, **Al-Fusul al-Muhimmah** p. 302 **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:514.
2. **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:496.
3. Sheikh Tusi, **Tathib al-Ahkam** 4:300 And 333; Sayyid Ibn Tawus, **Iqbal al-'Amal** p. 558; **Kamal al-Din** p. 653; **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 274; Muqadasi Shafeii, **'Iqid al-Durr** p. 65; Muttaqi Hindi, **The Reason For The Signs Of Mahdi Akhar Al-Zaman** p. 145.
4. Muttaqi Hindi, **Burhan** p. 144.

with Noah, I am more deserving of Noah than all people, whoever began to reason about us with Ibrahim, whoever began to reason with us about Muhammad, I am more deserving of Muhammad than all of the people, whoever began to reason with us about the prophets, I am more deserving of the prophets than all of the people, and whoever began to reason with us about the book of Allah, I am more deserving regarding the book of Allah than all people, today I and all of the Muslims too bear witness that we have been oppressed and rejected and we have been aggrieved and expelled from our land, property and family by wrath, and now we seek help from every Muslim in the way of Allah."[1]

In another narration from Na'im ibn Hamad, one of the elders of Bukhari has quoted by the chain of his own documents from Imam Baqir ('a), a lecture narrated from the Imam that may be the second lecture he delivers in the same place after the evening prayer. Na'im quotes from Imam Baqir ('a) who said:

"…then, when he performs the evening prayer, he shouts with a loud voice: O people, I remind you of Allah and your position before him. Allah, the exalted, has determined a proof for you, he has sent down the prophets and the heavenly books for you, he has commanded you to put no partner with him and always obey him and his prophet; he has commanded you to keep alive whatever the Qur'an has revived and to annihilate whatever the Qur'an has annihilated, he has commanded to you to always help the way of guidance and bear the burden of virtue, because the end of the world has come near and it has cried the cry of farewell. I summon you to Allah, his messenger; act in the way of the book of Allah, killing falsehood and reviving his Sunnah…"[2]

4. A hesitation regarding the two lectures about proclaiming revolution

In the first lecture we observe that the Imam emphasizes addressing the followers of all heavenly religions; a matter that rises from being

1. **The commentary of 'Aiashi** 1:65; Sheikh Mufid, **Ikhtisas** p. 256.
2. Na'im ibn Hemad, **Al-Malahem walfitan** p. 95; **'Iqid al-Durr** p. 145; Muttaqi Hindi, **Burhan** p. 141; **Al-Hawi Lelfatawi al-Hadithiah** 2:71; Sefarini, **Al-lewaeh** 2:11.

world wide of this religious insurrection which is the agent of the line of all prophets and summons people to all of the great aims that all the divine prophets have been proclaimers to. And also he emphasizes the point that he has the symbol of the school of two weights (*thaqalayn*), that is to say, the holy Qur'an and the holy household; he is the representative of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) that is the second weight (*thaql*) and it never will be separated from the first weight (*thaql*) that is the holy Qur'an, therefore, they are the most deserving and most acquainted of people to the book of Allah and whatever is in it, and they are the ways of guidance for man or the heavenly guidance of the Qur'an.

Then, as the third point he indicates the state of the Ahl al-Bayt having been oppressed and aggrieved by kinds of oppression; the matter that results in the absence of the last of them. And all of these matters originate from the sensual desires of the rebellious ambitious monopolistic ones playing with people's souls and properties and preventing the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) from establishing divine justice and leading people to the right way.

After that, the Imam seeks help from all the Muslims to remove the oppressive state, an act which will lead to the wellbeing of all mankind. Because, giving the reins of affairs to the one that is the representative of the line of divine prophets and is equal to the holy Qur'an, means certainty of the aims of divine justice. Of course, that Imam first seeks help from the eternal power of Allah the exalted; which is the sign of certain victory for his insurrection. He is the same man, rendered helpless, who, in the interpretation of the holy Qur'an, if he prays, his prayers will be accepted, and he is the same guardian over the blood of the slaughtered person who, again, will surely be assisted by Allah, in the interpretation of the holy Qur'an. And with this expression, the Imam persuades people to help him in order that they attain prosperity in this world and the world will be secure from worldly torture and abjectness and from the torture of the other world whose torture is very much more severe than the torture of this world.

5. Proclaiming the goals of the insurrection

In the lecture that Imam Mahdi (‘a) delivers after the evening prayer (his second talk), he discusses the general aims of his insurrection; the

aims that he seeks people's help with in order to them; the aims that intended to extract vengeance for the oppression that occurred to the Ahl al-bayt, their school and their way. The Imam proclaims that his first general aim is adducing unification; a pure unification that the prophets (‘a) were appointed to attain and on account of which the heavenly books were sent down. And such an aim is possible only by worshipping the blessed and exalted Allah, obeying the messenger of Allah (s), reviving whatever that Qur'an has revived and annihilating whatever Qur'an has annihilated; that is innovation, polytheism, and baseless worship.

Therefore, the Imam seeking people's help for this purpose is tantamount to an invitation to their goal as well as assisting virtue.

6. The Response of people to Imam's request of assistance and swearing allegiance to him

The first ones who quickly swear allegiance to the Imam in the place where the Imam delivers his lecture and seeks help are his most select companions:

“After that three hundred odd whose number is equal to the companions of Badr, swear allegiance to the Imam between the Element and Place. Among them are the noble men of Egypt, the pious men of Shaam, and the good men of Iraq.”[1]

Another group of narrations that are quoted by the Sunni sources indicate that the appearance of the Imam and swearing allegiance to him takes place after the struggle between the tribes of Hijaz, and first he refuses to accept their allegiance and says to them: “Woe to you, the number of allegiances that you broke and how much blood you shed!”[2] It seems that non-acceptance of the allegiance is an action for informing those who swear allegiance to the responsibility and the results of allegiance and the important commission that they appeal

1. **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 284, and narrated from it; **Bihar al-Anwar** 52:334; **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:517-518.
2. **Mustadrak Hakem** 4:503; Ibn Hajar, **Alqaul Almukhtasar** p. 18; Muttaqi Hindi, **Burhan** p. 143; **'Iqid al-Durr** p. 109; **Mu'ajam of the narrations of Imam Mahdi (‘a)** 1:449.

to. Like the action that his grandfather Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) did when people resorted to him after the murder of Othman.

Another group of narrations indicate that the movement of those who plan for the appearance of Imam al-Zaman ('a), swear allegiance to from far way when he is in Mecca, and after that they renew their allegiance to him in his presence.[1]

Some of the narrations also stipulate that the special companions of the Imam, that is to say, three hundred and thirteen people miraculously attend Mecca or by fast and advanced means of transport in order to understand his appearance and swear allegiance to him.[2]

7. Departure of Imam towards Kufa and cleaning the inner front

Imam moves towards Kufa with his army and after settling the sedition of the Sufyani and appearing the phenomenon of Khasf in the region of Baydae,[3] he sets that city as the residence of his military movement.[4]

He raises the flag of the great Prophet (s), which is deposited before him in the city of Najaf.[5] And the angels that had helped his grandfather, the messenger of Allah (s) in the war of Badr help him too.[6] The noble narrations mention that the Imam and his army will confront difficulties and hardships at the beginning of their military

1. **Fitan Ibn Hemad** pp. 83-84; **AlHawi Lelfatawi** 2:67; **AlBurhan** p. 118.
2. **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 315; **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:453.
3. **The commentary of Tabari** 22:72; **Tathkereh Qurtabi** 2:693; **Sunan Daremi** p. 104; **Musnad Ahmad** 6:290; **Sahih Muslim** 4:2208; **Sunan Abu-Dawood** 4:108; **Sunan Ibn Majjeh** 2:1351; **Sunan Tirmithi** 4:407; **the history of Bukhari** 5:118; **Sunan Nasai** 5:207. And the narrations of about Khasf of the army of Sufiani are numerous which they are narrated in Sohah and other books of Sunnites and also by Ahl al-Bayt.
4. **Bihar al-Anwar** 52:308; **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:583-527-493.
5. **The commentary of 'Aiashi** 1:103; **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 308; **Kamal al-Din** p. 672.
6. **The commentary of 'Aiashi** 1:197; **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:549.

movement[1] and the battles of the Imam for cleaning the inner front will last eight months and his total battle will last twenty years.[2]

The considerable point is that the chosen direction of that Imam is the same direction that his grandfather Imam Husayn (‘a) chose in his martyrdom-seeking movement from Mecca to Medina. During that time, Imam was prevented from going to that city in the middle of the way, but his grandchild Imam Mahdi (‘a) will enter this city and he will accomplish the goals and follow the way of his grandfather, the master of martyrs.

When Imam enters to Kufa, he observes three flags flying there,[3] he removes the agitation of the conditions of that city by elevating the Muhammadian flag which has been left with him, therefore he hoists one flag in that city, he fights with a sect that the noble narrations call “Batriyyah” and annihilates hypocrisy in that city.[4]

8. Imam's entering to Bayt al-Maqdas and the descending of Prophet Jesus (‘a)

Many of the narrations stipulate that Imam Mahdi (‘a) enters Bayt al-Maqdas and his entering will be contemporaneous with a very important event that is the descent of the messenger of Allah, Jesus (‘a), the son of Maryam (‘a), and the texts of the bible have given glad tidings for his coming besides the quoted narrations in the valid books of Shi'ah and Sunnite.[5] The narrations have mentioned that the Jama'at morning prayer establishes and Prophet Jesus does not accept the invitation of Imam Mahdi (‘a) to lead the prayer as Imam and he instead performs prayer behind Imam Mahdi and for the non-acceptance of leadership of the prayer, Prophet Jesus reasons that

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1. **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 297.
2. **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:469; as compared with the first time, and the narration of Ibn Hemad /127 says: the battles of Imam will last twenty years.
3. **Irshad** p. 362; **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 280.
4. **Dalail al-Imamah** p. 241; **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 283.
5. **Sahih Bukhari** 4:305; **Muslim** 1:136; **The history of Bukhari** 7:233; **Sunan ibn Majjah** 2:1357; **Sunan Tarmidhi** 4:512; **Sahih Bukhari** 3:107; **Fitan ibn Hemad** p. 103; and many other sources that have been narrated this matter from the two sects.

the prayer has been established because of the blessed soul of Imam Mahdi, and he performs the prayer behind Imam Mahdi in order to emphasise the mission of the last Prophet (s). This will be a great help for the revolution of Imam Mahdi (‘a), because western society, being mostly Christian, will care for this matter.

Of course, it can be understood that Imam Mahdi entering the land of al-Quds should be after its freedom from the corruption of the Jews and removing their sovereignty from that region. Therefore we can say that the entering of Imam to that land after cleaning the inner front, is a preface for encountering the foreign enemies of Islam or according to the narrations: Rome and conquering all the earth. And maybe the secret of the matter that Prophet Jesus descends at the same time with the entering of Imam Mahdi (‘a) to Bayt al-Maqdas, can be understood from the same subject.

9. Killing the Impostor (Dajjal) and ending the sovereignty of the material civilizations

Most of the narrations that have been spoken about the descending of Prophet Jesus (‘a), have highlighted the point that he will break crosses and the Christians will abandon the belief of accepting him as their God,[1] then the Dajjal, the one that is the symbol of the material civilizations, will be killed by Jesus or with his help by Imam Mahdi.

By the Christians returning from belief in the divinity of Prophet Jesus (‘a) and observing the assistance of their prophet to Imam Mahdi, who is the last leader of Islam, the way of their believing in the religion of Islam-as those who form the greatest portion of the inhabitants of the earth, becomes smooth, and consequently the important commissions of killing Dajjal, annihilating the rebellious civilizations, conquering the earth, establishing the global just government of Islam, beginning the effective and reformatory operations, and certainty of the aims of the prophets (‘a) will be possible.

This was a brief expression from the main headings that the movement of Imam Mahdi will accomplish after his appearance and all of them have such great detail that there is no opportunity here for

1. Suyuti. **Al-Durr al-Manthur** 2:350.

expressing them all. Therefore, by observing the same brief expression, we begin to discuss the method (Sirah) of that Imam after his appearance in the most eminent arenas, and then we express the characteristics of the time of that Imam.

10. The Sirah of Mahdi ('a), is identical to the Sirah of the messenger of Allah (s)

The narrations indicate that the method of that Imam is the same as the method of his grandfather, the messenger of Allah (s); the messenger who said: "I was appointed between two ignorances (Jahaliyyah), the last one of which is worse than the first,"[1] and he expressed many of the manifestations of the second ignorance that is worse than the worst ignorance for his nation. Imam Mahdi ('a) does the same work that the messenger of Allah (s) did, like his grandfather who destroyed whatever was before him, he destroys whatever is before him and found a new Islam.[2] The messenger of Allah spoke about the oppressed state of Islam after he and Muslims narrated these narrations about him.[3]

Therefore, as his grandfather annihilated the first ignorance, Imam Mahdi annihilates the second, and renews Islam, which the dust of adversity had covered. But because of different chronological characteristics and conditions in the time of Imam Mahdi and the messenger of Allah, inevitably there are differences between the Sirah of them, and these are the chronological characteristics which interpret these differences and some of these differences can be observed in the religious, administrative, juridical, military policies and … of that Imam. Therefore such differences cannot cause any harm to the Sirah of those honorable men.

11. Reviving Sunnah and the marks of the holy Prophet (s)

The great reformatory movement of Imam Mahdi ('a) is based on reviving and establishing the Mohammadian Sunnah; the straightness

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1. **Amali Shajari** 2:77.
2. **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 232, Moqaddesi Shafi'ai, **Iqid al-Durar** p. 227, **Tathib al-Ahkam** 6:154.
3. **Musnad Ahmad** 1:184; **Sahih Muslim** 1:130; **Sunan ibn Majjah** 2:1319; **Tarmithi** 5:18.

of all Islamic values is because of it. The great Prophet (s) has said: "a man of my household will fight for my Sunnah as I fought for revelation.[1] And he will put his foot completely on my footprints.[2] He is a man of my family, Allah will protect me in him and he acts according to my Sunnah."[3]

So, he reveals the marks of the great prophets.[4] He summons people to the Sunnah of the messenger of Allah (s). Therefore, he renews the marks of the messenger of Allah as he renews Islam and he reveals whatever is obscured of Islam. He has called "Mahdi", because he guides people to a hidden matter of which most people have been negligent.[5]

12. The rigour of the Imam ('a) with himself and his gentle behavior with people

The Sirah of Imam Mahdi ('a) about himself and his nation is exactly the objective incarnation of a true Islamic ruler in that the government is the way for him to serve and guide people and is not a source for obtaining huge incomes, or for oppressing, and abusing public properties and enslaving people. That great man revives the portrait presented by the rulers that preceded him; his two honorable grandfathers, the great messenger (s) and his successor Imam 'Ali ('a) have showed his face in the best form. The Sirah of the Imam regarding himself is in this manner: his clothes are nothing but coarse cloth and his meal is nothing but bread.[6] He is the one who fears Allah and upturns everything and he won't scourge anyone except for adducing divine limitations.[7] He is kind to his nation and he is famous for this quality: it seems that he makes the poor, free from neediness[8],

1. Ibn Hemad, **Fitan** p. 102; Ibn Hajar, **Al-Qaul al-Mukhtasar** p. 7, Mottaghi, **Borhan** p. 95.
2. **Al-Qaul al-Mukhtasar** p. 10; Ibn Arabi, **Al-Futohat Al-Makkiah** 3:332.
3. **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:498.
4. **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:454.
5. **Sunan Daremi** p. 101; **Fitan Ibn Hemad** p. 98; **Iqid Al-Durar** p. 40; **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:527.
6. R.to **Kafi** 1:411; **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:515.
7. **Malahem Ibn Tawus** p. 132.
8. **Fitan Ibn Hemad** p. 98; **Iqid Al-Durar** p. 227.

he is broadminded, people know him as their saviour and their shelter and take refuge in him like honeybees take refuge in their queen,[1] or wasps that take refuge in their nest.[2]

13. The juridical Sirah

The promised Mahdi (‘a) is the one through whom Allah, the exalted, will fill the earth with justice as it has been filled with oppression and injustice, and the hearsay narrations are registered about this matter from the great messenger (s) and the effectiveness of this important commission needs a decisive juridical method; therefore, the juridical method of Imam Mahdi (‘a) is the same as that of his grandfather, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) who acted severely in order to find the usurped rights of people and return them from those who had seized them; even if this was from right under the tooth or in regards of a marriage-settlement of a woman. This is also the manner of Imam Mahdi: returning the rights of people to the extent of returning a right from under someone's tooth.[3] His justice reaches such a level that in his time “people wish for dead persons,”[4] that is to say; they wish the dead were restored to life in order to enjoy the blessings of his justice.

A group of the noble narrations also have mentioned that Imam Mahdi (‘a), like Saint David and Saint Solomon (‘a), judge without any deduction to the witness of witnesses and according to divine knowledge,[5] and maybe this matter is because of the commission of the Imam for establishing real justice and not external justice, because with adducing the witness, the external justice will be established, although in reality this is the opposite of real justice. And it is a known fact that the history of man and the history of Islam are its best witnesses and how often because of being bound over external reasons, real justice has been concealed, and only external justice settled. In any case, this is from the characteristics of the era of the

1. **Ibn Hemad** p. 99; Suyuti, **Alhawi** 2:77.
2. Motaghi Hindi, **Burhan** p. 78.
3. **Ibn Hemad** 98; **Alhawi** 2:83; **Al-Qaul al-Mukhtasar** 25; **'Iqid al-Durr** 36.
4. **Ibn Hemad** 99; **Al-Qaul al-Mukhtasar** 5.
5. **Kafi** 1:397; **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:447.

promised Mahdi (‘a) and is in coordination with the general conditions of that era.

14. Sirah of the Imam in front of the religions

Imam Mahdi (‘a) will annihilate all of the manifestations of polytheism and he will propagate a pure unification: “There will be no place on earth where someone other than Allah will be worshiped and although it is unpleasant to the pagans all religion belongs to Allah,”[1] Imam presents faith to all people, he will eliminate the religious state, he will assemble all people around the one Islamic religion, and Allah will amend the affair of the nation by him, remove diversity among the nation, and create friendship and sociability in their hearts;[2] that Imam accomplishes this important matter based on the pure prophetic Sunnah or the forgotten and hidden values of noble Islam, and, as his grandfather, the great Prophet (s) said: “His Sunnah is my Sunnah, and he excites people according to my nation and religion.”[3]

Some narrations indicate that Imam Mahdi (‘a) brings out the original Old Testament and the Gospel from a cave in Antioch and uses them to begin discussions with the Jews and the Christians. He also brings out the jewels of Bayt al-Maqdas and the table-linen of Saint Solomon (‘a) and returns them to Bayt al-Maqdas,[4] and prophet Jesus will help him to do this; the ones who reason with the Roman and Chinese Christians with Imam Mahdi (‘a),[5] and some messengers from the Jews and Christians go before him after his descent, and claim that they are his companions and friends, but Jesus (‘a) banishes them from himself and stipulates that his friends and companions are Muslims, and he joins the companions of Mahdi (‘a).[6] This matter causes the Christians to return from belief of his

1. **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 2:410.
2. **Ibn Hemad** 102; Tabarani, **Al-Awsat** 1:136.
3. **Kamal al-Din** p. 411.
4. **Ibn Hemad, Sunan Dani** p. 101; Siuti, **Alhawi** 2:75; Sefarini, **Lawaeh** 2:2; **the history of Baghdad** 9:471; **'Iqid al-Durr** p. 141.
5. **Ghaibat Nu'amani** p. 146.
6. **The History of Bukhari** 7:133; **Muslim** 4:2253; **Ibn Majjah** 2:1357; **Tarmithi** 4:512.

divinity. Jesus (‘a) goes also to the pilgrimage of Hajj, and he will be buried by the messenger of Allah (s) after his death.[1]

Some of the narrations also say that Imam Mahdi (‘a) will bring out the original Old Testament from some mountains in Sham and by it he will reason with the Jews a consequence of which, therefore, a great number of them will embrace Islam,[2] then he brings out the Tranquillizing Coffin from the lake of Tabarestan and puts it in front of himself in Bayt al-Maqdas, and by this act most of the Jews embrace Islam and very few of them will remain on contumacy and obstinacy.”[3]

15. Fighting with innovations and the negation of the exaggerators and the false searchers

Imam Mahdi (‘a) removes any alteration from the lap of religion and eliminates all the innovations that Muslims have inherited by being so far from the *Thaqalayn* for so long, the pure Sunnah of prophet hood, and cessation of these precious capitals. The aim of the appearance of that Imam is: Allah wants to eliminate any innovation by means of him and cause death to any sedition by him, Allah opens the gate of any goodness by him and closes the door to any evil by him.”[4]

This is the first action that he does. The noble narrations point to the destruction of the fences that the Ummayad propagated as an innovation in mosques building - in order to cause a separation between the Imam and those who perform prayer behind him- by Imam as one of the evidences of this matter,[5] also the Imam returns the position of Abraham to its original place,[6] he eliminates any innovation that has been created in the mosques during the course of

1. **The History of Bukhari** 1:263; **Tarmithi** 5:588.
2. **Ibn Hemad** p. 98, Ghanduzi, **Yanabi'a al-Mawadah** 3:344.
3. **Ibn Hemad** pp. 99-100; **Iqid al-Durar** p. 147; **Al-Qaul al-Mukhtasar** p. 24.
4. **Malahem Sayyid ibn Tawus** p. 32.
5. **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:506.
6. **Ithbat al-Hudat** p. 527.

years and returns them to the original Islamic Sunnah and Mohammadan method.[1]

16. The administrative Sirah

Imam Mahdi selects some rulers from his best and the most eminent companions for managing the governmental affairs of the different regions of the earth; those who are decorated with the highest level of merit of an Islamic ruler; qualities like knowledge, jurisprudence, bravery, purity and sincerity,[2] and at the same time, the Imam investigates their works and their manner of permanently performing their commissions and accounts them severely: "from the signs of Mahdi is that : he is exacting with governmental officials, he is generous and he is kind with the poor,"[3] in the era of the Imam, the beneficence of beneficent ones increases and the repentance of the evil-doers will be accepted.[4]

Imam behaves severely with those who have made the religion and all that is sacred as a means of obtaining income and those who attempt to mislead people, and he denies them of this work. Therefore, one of the works that Imam embarks on from the beginning is cutting off the hand of the formal custodians of Ka'bah; he disgraces them before people in order that they not be deceived by them, because they are "the thieves of Allah."[5]

17. Jihadi Sirah

The expected Imam (‘a) rises with a sword and of course the appearance of that Imam will take place after delivering the full ultimatum, revealing the fact, opening of the doors of Allah, blocking the false ways, the occurrence of the magnanimities and miracles that indicate the Imam enjoying divine assistance, the help of the angels that took part in the war of Badr, having the cloak of Joseph, Moses'

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1. **Ithbat al-Hudat** pp. 516-517.
2. **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:494.
3. **Musnad ibn Abi shaibah** 15:199, **Sunan Daremi** p. 101, **Hawi Siuti** 2:77.
4. **Musnad ibn Abi shaibah** 15:199; **Sunan Daremi** p. 101; **Hawi Siuti** 2:77.
5. **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:449-455.

rod and stone, Solomon's ring, the chain mail, sword and flag of the great messenger (s) and other inheritances of the prophets and the revealing of all of them to him,[1] and it will be manifest that he is truly continuing the way of the prophets of Allah and tries to provide certainty to the divine goals of the prophets and establishing heavenly justice; and by revealing these sins, no one insists on the false beliefs but deviated and corrupted persons of whom nothing is expected but corruption, torture, and oppression. Therefore the Mahdawi movement will necessarily purify the government from the pollution of such people and as we observe, the Jihadi Sirah of Imam (‘a) in front of the oppressors is mixed with firmness, precaution and resistance, so he won't leave any moving one of them on the earth and he won't allow them to engage in corrupting activities.

Additionally, according to the noble narrations, the expected Imam Mahdi (‘a) always acts according to the method of his honorable grandfather, the great Prophet (s) and his successor Imam ‘Ali (‘a), therefore, he won't begin the war till the time that he presents the religion of Allah to them and reasons with them by the reasons that are accepted by them,[2] that we pointed in this matter in his bringing out the old testament and the gospel, and it is another important aspect in relation to the Jihadi method of that Imam.

The narrations indicate that one of the Jihadi methods of the Imam is cleaning the inner front; that is to say, cleaning the front of the world of Islam from the deviated and combatant conducts before fighting foreign forces, and so Imam annihilates the rebellion of Sufyani and the influence of the fool Betriah and Mutawalah and the obstinate and deviated [Nasibis],[3] therefore, before doing any action of fighting with the Jews of Rom, killing the Impostor and conquering all the earth, he establishes a temporary ceasefire with Rom. And before cleaning the inner front, he arranges the lines of his army, appoints the meritorious military commanders and determines a special flag

1. **Ithbat al-Hudat** pp. 439-440-494-478, and R. to **'Iqid al-Durr** p. 135; **al-Fusul al-Muhimmah** p. 298; **Kifaiah al-Athar** p. 147; **Ibn Hemad** p. 98; **al-Qaul Al-Mukhtasar** p. 34; **Burhan Mottaghi** p. 152.
2. **Kafi** 8:227 and narrated from it; **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:450.
3. **Irshad** 2:384 and narrated from it; **Bihar al-Anwar** 52:386; and narrated from it; **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:544.

for each of them. He removes the annoyances and frailties from his companions and empowers their hearts filling them with faith for Allah;[1] on whose way they fight, and he also examines them and separates their good from their bad,[2] in order that for the performing of his great reformatory commission, he should have an idealistic, powerful and unified army that has the desirable talent, military merit and a powerful spirit.

18. The financial policy

The promised Mahdi (‘a) revives the task of “equality in paying”;[3] a system which was used in the era of the messenger of Allah (s) which changed after that honorable prophet and, by building new criterions, the discipline of class distinction gradually replaced it, and although the successor of the prophet, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and his son Imam Hasan (‘a) after obtaining caliphate, in the short times of their caliphate tried to act according to the discipline of “equality in paying,” after the martyrdom of these two honorable men, this discipline was totally eliminated and the Ummayad began to possess the property of Muslims and related them to themselves and were awarding these properties to people who were related to their own political interests. They changed the paying of Bayt al-Mal from state legal grant to the state of monetary bribe, so, they paid this money to people in order to attract them to help them in a false way or they paid it to them as hush-money in order to silence them.

But the expected Mahdi (‘a) distributes the Bayt al-Mal equally among Muslims and all people are equal in enjoying the divine riches and the services that arise from the public properties, and it is one of the dimensions of Muhammadian justice, which he is bound to establish. The noble narrations stipulate that Imam will eliminate the state of “giving a part of land by caliph or Sultan to someone.” We read in the narration: “When our Qaim rises, the program of giving governmental lands to people will be eliminated and there will be no

1. **Ithbat Al-Hudat** p. 71.
2. **Kafi** 8:167; **Kamal al-Din** p. 672.
3. **Musnad Ahmad** 3:37; **Malahem ibn Monadi** p. 42; **Mizan al-I'atidal** 3:97.

feudal system."[1] The aim of this work is to dissociate agriculture lands and other national riches and interests from being given by rulers to their relatives. This phenomenon was current after the messenger of Allah and especially in the time of the third caliph and during the government of the Ummayads.

Many of the narrations have spoken about the high level of payment in the time of that Imam and know it as one of the characteristics of his era, and according to the interpretation of the narrations: "He scatters the riches onto the people."[2] The Imam will grant people whatever they want of him, and this matter although indicating his greatness and generosity and showing the huge blessings of his time, divulges another important point in his economical method; making people sufficiently free from want and preparing the economical welfare for their lives as they can worship Allah and carry out social and individual useful reformatory works with rest and tranquility of thought.

Therefore, it is clear that the method of that Imam in the ground of economy is fully related to his reformatory commission and establishing the unified society that sincerely worships Allah, and the financial and economic matters plan this important matter and eliminate its obstacles.

19. The general image of the Mahdawi government in the religious texts

Now we have reached the end of this section. In this section we briefly present the picture that the narrations and religious texts trace from the government of the promised Mahdi (‘a).

The Mahdawi government establishes itself with the sole aim of putting an end to the oppression and suffering that man has been struggling with throughout history and which has covered the surface of the earth because of rule of recalcitrant persons, the sovereignty of carnal desire and material tendencies, and, according to the interpretation of the narration, with the appearance of Imam Mahdi

1. Humairi, **Qurb al-Asnad** p. 39.
2. **Musnad Ahmad** 3:80.

after many centuries: "Allah will relieve the people; so, blessed is he who understands his era."[1]

Therefore, Allah will give certainty to all wishes that rise from the sound nature of man for the Muslim nation and all of mankind, He will remove doubt and will establish a monotheistic society that orders good and prohibits the unlawful, a society of people who will try their best to perform good deeds and travel up through the degrees and levels of perfection and the stairs of light one after another.

In such times, the earth and sky will offer all of their blessings and whatever people obtain, it is not only free from wanting material things, but Allah will fill the hearts of the nation of Muhammad (s) with riches and his justice will surround them.[2] It means that he will release them from the captivity of the limited material and living needs. Therefore, the expected Mahdi will release Muslims from the abjectness of obeying deviated persons and according to the interpretation of the narration: "And because of him, the abjectness of slavery will be removed from you."[3] He releases the world from the captivity and abjectness of the animal life and slavery of desires and he will open all the gates of evolution and the moral and intellectual progress in front of man, and the era of that Imam will be observing a great mental and spiritual development. Imam Baqir (ʻa) says in this connection: "When our Qaim rises, Allah will put his hand on the head of the servants and, therefore, human wisdom and thought will be perfected."[4]

One of the other matters, besides the main factor that we've pointed to, that can help this matter is a wonderful progress which the era of the Imam will observe, especially in the ground of communications, and we observe the first signs of it in our time and in accordance with scientific findings. Imam Sadiq points to this matter:

"When our Qaim rises, the Glorious Allah sharpens the ear and eye of our Shi'ahs, so there will no longer be a courier and messenger

1. **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:504.
2. **Musnad Ahmad** 3:37.
3. **Ghaibat Tusi** 185 N 144.
4. **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:448; Kafi 1:25; **Kamal al-Din** p. 675.

between them, but they see him in his place, wherever they are, and when he speaks with them, they hear his voice."[1]

Of course, maybe it is because of the invisible matters, that makes them reach high spiritual levels, and gain the possibility of reaching. Although this matter is possible in our time by the new and developed communicational means, whatever that is emphasized by relying on the noble narrations is that many of the hidden facts and matters will be revealed in the era of government of Mahdi (‘a), and many believers will obtain high degrees of knowing hidden secrets and the science of the book; they will travel over the frontiers of natural means and rules and many other phenomena that today we consider as unusual miracles.

With due attention to preparing all necessary factors and conditions for material and spiritual evolution by Mahdawi's government, a monotheistic society will be formed which only worships Allah sincerely, the mere faith relationship ruling in it, and the values like being hated by the one who takes *pledge will have more confidence in the saying of his pious brother* (pledge and mortgage is more certain for him than the saying of a Muslim) *and making a profit by his pious brother is as usury to a pious man,*[2] will be ruling in society and on that day, even the commercial enterprise will be rated as an act of worshipping the Glorious Allah, because its aim is only giving service to Allah creatures.

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) giving a narration describing the worldly government of Imam Mahdi (‘a) saying: "Allah will help him with His angels, he will support his companions, he will help him with his signs to gain victory over the inhabitants of the earth or make them submit to the religion of Allah by choice or force. Then, he will fill the earth with justice, light and reason, the length and width of the cities will be under his obedience, there will be no pagan unless he believes and no debauchee unless he believe in soundness, in his government the fierce animals will be become cooperative, the earth will reveal its blessings, the sky will descend its blessing, treasures will be

1. **Ithbat Al-Hudat** 3:450-451.
2. Sheikh Saduq, **Man La Yahdharahu al-Faqih** 3:313; **Tahdhib al-Ahkam** 7:178.

manifested for him and he will govern on the earth for forty years. So, blessed are those who understand the time of his government."[1]

Yes, it is under the shadow of the government of the expected Mahdi which it becomes clear to all of the people of the world that the goodness and soundness of man and his material and spiritual evolution will be certain under the shadow of the heavenly mission and by the innocent guardians of Allah. And this is a work that the exalted Allah will accomplish it by his last guardian and the end of the twelve Imams, Imam Mahdi ('a); the one whose coming to the nations Allah has promised. As his grandfather, the great messenger (s) has said: "And for this reason, the inhabitants of the earth and heaven will be satisfied with him."[2]

1. **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:524.
2. **Mustadrak Hakem** 4:465; **Fitan Ibn Hemad** p. 99.

CHAPTER THREE
A RAY FROM THE NARRATIONS OF IMAM MAHDI (AS)

1. The word of the Imam (‘a) in relation to Tawhid and rejecting exaggeration

“Allah is the one who created bodies and divided sustenance, because he is not body and has not been penetrated in a body. Nothing is like him and he is the hearer who is knowledgeable. But about the Imams: they are those who want from Allah and the exalted Allah in replying their wish and for the greatness of them, creates everything and gives sustenance to it.”[1]

2. In expressing the reason of creation, sending the messengers, and determining the representatives

“O, may you rest in peace, know that the exalted Allah has not created his creatures in vanity and He has not left them in futility, but He has created them with his power and has granted them the sense of sight, hearing, and He has granted them heart and wisdom. Then He sent messengers to warn the people and give them glad tidings in order that they command creatures to obey Allah and deny them disobeying him, and teaching them whatever they do not know from the order of their Creator and their religion. He sent down the books to them and dispatched the angels[2] for them to come and go between Allah and the men selected by Allah and bring for them the virtues that Allah has put for them and give them the manifested reasons, luminous proofs, and the conquering signs that Allah has granted to them.

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1. **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 178; **Ihtijaj Tabarsi** 2:471; **Ithbat al-Hudat** 3:757.
2. This item is registered in **Ihtijaj Sheikh Tabarsi** 2:280; and he sent his angels to them and by granting a superiority and virtue to his prophets he made a distinction between them and his angels.

One of the prophets is the one who made the fire become cool and safe for him and Allah designated him as His friend. The other one is whom Allah spoke to and made his stick like a dragon. Another one was the one who was reviving the dead by the command of Allah, and was giving health to the one who was born congenitally blind and the one who suffered from leprosy. One of them is he who learned the language of birds, and Allah granted him everything. Then, the exalted Allah sent Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), in order that he be a mercy for the people of the world, He perfected His riches by sending him and gave an end to his prophets by sending him. Allah sent him for the people of all classes; he revealed the truth of his mission to people and expressed his signs to them.

After that he summoned the praiseworthy and prosperous prophet to Himself while his death was a loss for the world and deposited the responsibility of the society after him to his brother, his successor, his heir and his cousin ‘Ali ibn AbiTalib (‘a), and after him, He deposited this task to his successors who were of his children, and He revived his religion through them and made a clear distinction between this clan, their brothers, their cousins and their close relatives in order that the proof of Allah will be distinguished of the one who this proof has appointed to him, and the leader will be distinguished from the follower. Therefore, this difference was proved and Allah made them innocent of sins, faults, uncleanness, and free from mistakes, and he put them as the treasurers of his knowledge, depositaries of his wisdom and the place of his secrets, and he confirmed them by reasons and proofs. And if the matter was not in this manner, all people were equal in this matter, everyone could claim for the order of the Glorious Allah, the truth would be not distinguished from lies, and the wise man not distinguished from the ignorant.”[1]

3. About the position of Imams (‘a)

“What is necessary for you is that you should believe that we are determined by Allah as models and leaders for you; we are the successors of Allah on the earth, the trustees of Allah to the people and the reason of Allah to His servants, we are those who know the

1. **Bihar al-Anwar** 53:194; **Mu'ajam Ahadith al-Imam al-Mahdi** 4:382.

lawful and unlawful of Allah, the interpretation of the book of Allah, and the determined word."[1]

4. About the order of the discipline of Imamate and the earth's not being empty of proof

Part of the letter of the Imam to his two special deputies, Amri and Amri's son:

"Allah grant you success of being obedient, guide you on the path of His religion and make you prosperous with His satisfaction, whatever you quoted from Meythami about Mokhtar, his debates, and his reasoning with people about the matter that only Ja'far ibn 'Ali is the successor of my father; its news had already reached me, and I knew all the things that you have written in relation to the words of your companions about him. I take refuge in Allah from blindness after sight, aberration after guidance, and from blameworthy acts and annihilating seditions; because Allah has said:

﴿الٓمٓ ۝١ أَحَسِبَ ٱلنَّاسُ أَن يُتۡرَكُوٓاْ أَن يَقُولُوٓاْ ءَامَنَّا وَهُمۡ لَا يُفۡتَنُونَ﴾

"A, L, M, do people suppose that when they said we believed, they will be released and they won't be examined?"[2]

How they fall in sedition, live in vagrancy, and choose the left and right way? Have they kept distance from their religion? Are they in doubt or have they chosen the way of enmity with Allah? Don't they know whatever they have expressed from the correct news and true narrations? Or do they claim forgetfulness? Don't they know that the earth will never be empty of the reason of Allah, whether he is visible or hidden?

Don't they know the order and arrangement of the leaders after their prophets till by the order of the Glorious Allah the matter of leadership reached the previous Imam, Imam Hasan ibn 'Ali ('a), he became the successor of his fathers ('a) and guided people to Allah and the right way; those who were a luminous light, a shining star and

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1. **The commentary of 'Ayyashi** 1:16; **Mu'ajam Ahadith al-Imam al-Mahdi** 4:467.
2. *Surat 'Ankabut, 29:1-2.*

a bright moon. Allah wanted for him whatever he had and he paced in the way of his fathers in detail and selected a successor for himself according to the contract that he has concluded with Allah; a successor who Allah has hidden according to his order till a specified time in a hidden location based on his predestinated and valid divine decree.

And therefore the place of Imamate and leadership is among our family and the virtue of this matter belongs to us. And if Allah commands him to do whatever he has denied him of and removes from him the order that he has prescribed for him, he will show Allah in the most glorious way, the clearest reason and the brightest sign, then he will show himself and will rise according to his reason. But divine decree is unchangeable, and his will is firm and no one can take the lead of his grace. Therefore, people should leave obedience of the carnally desired and be firm on the principle that they were firm on before, they should not search about what is hidden from them because they will fall into sin, they should also not embark in revealing the secret of Allah because they will be regretful, they should know that the truth is always with us and among us and no one says such things but us unless he is a liar who makes lies, and no one claims such position but us unless he is a deviated person who misleads people, people should be content with what we say and not search for an explanation and interpretation, they will be satisfied with our points and not request stipulations."[1]

Godwarriness and being saved from sedition

It is written in the second letter of Imam (‘a), which is from the letters issued to Sheikh Mufid during the long-term absence: "I wish that Allah will keep you safe, and this should come forth because of the riches that Allah has granted you, with the sedition that threatens the soul of those who have planted seeds of falsehood, and by this act you should threaten those who walk down the false paths, therefore, you can make believers happy with the annihilation of that sedition and make the guilty ones sad. The sign of our movement from this unchasteness is an event that will happen in the holy shrine by a

1. **Kamal al-Din** p. 510; **Bihar al-Anwar** 53:190; **Mu'ajam Ahadith al-Imam al-Mahdi** 4:287.

blameworthy hypocrite that breaks the respect for blood and makes believers the target of his attack by his trick; but in this ground he won't reach his aim - that is committing injustice to the believers - because we will support them by prayers that are never hidden from the Allah of the heaven and sky. Therefore, the heart of our friends should be quietened down with this work and they should have confidence in it although unpleasant events threaten them; because by the time they refrain from committing the sins that are denied of them, by the aid of the beautiful works of the praiseworthy Allah, the end of the task will be admirable for them.

And we promise you, O our devoted friend, that you have risen in our way to fight against the oppressors, and we wish that Allah helps you as he helped your previous fathers; whoever of your religious brothers who choose virtuousness as his profession and give the poor the necessary rights that he is responsible to give to the poor, he will be secure from the sedition of the false ones, from dark and misleading sufferings, and whoever that is parsimonious in giving the riches that Allah has granted him to those who Allah has commanded for observing their state, he will be from the losers in this and that world. And if our Shi'ahs (may Allah help them to be successful in obeying him) were unanimous in being faithful to the contract that they are responsible for, the prosperity of our meeting would not delayed for them…."[1]

5. The care of the Imam ('a) for the Muslims

"…we are conversant with all of your news and none of it is hidden from us, and we know that from the time that many of you faced the works that previous pious men were extremely distant from, and trampled upon the contract that they had been concluded with Allah like the foolish ones, you have been affected to somewhat abjectness.

We never leave you to yourselves and never forget you, and, if it were not in this manner, the hardships will fall on you and the enemies will trample upon you. So, fear Allah whose glory is high, and help us in bringing you out of the sedition that has surrounded you; sedition where whoever's death is predestinated, will be

1. **Ihtijaj Tabarsi** 2:498.

annihilated in it and whoever that is reached to his wish, will be supported against it. And this is the sign of the nearness of our movement and spreading of you with our order and our prohibition, and in spite of the desire of pagans Allah will complete his light."[1]

6. The permanent preparation of that Imam for appearance

"All of you should do the deeds that make you near to our love and affection and refrain from whatever makes you near our anger and dissatisfaction. Because our matter will happen suddenly and without any preface and after that the repentance and returning is of no use and your regret for sins will not prevent you from punishment. Allah inspires you the way of maturity and makes you successful by His grace for obtaining His mercy"[2].

7. Samples of the short answers of the Imam

Part of the Imam's reply to the questions of Ishaq ibn Ya'qoub:

"…this is the reply to you about what you have asked: know that the exalted Allah has no relationship with anyone, and whoever denies he is not from me and he has paced in the way of Noah's son; the way of my uncle, Ja'far and his sons is the way of Joseph's brothers…

But we accept your properties to clean them; so, whoever wants, he can pay his financial wages and whoever does not want, he can refrain from paying… but it is only Allah that knows the time of appearance and relief, and those who determine a time for it are liars… and but about the property that you sent for us; it is accepted by us only the amount of it which is pure… pray more for haste in the matter of relief, because the relief of your works depends on this matter."[3]

8. Samples of the prayers and Ziyarats of the Imam

"O Allah, I implore you that whoever makes fervent prayers to you in the desert and the sea and calls you, to show your grace to the poor of those who believe in you, grant them wealth and riches, show your

1. **Ihtijaj Tabarsi** 2:495.
2. **Ihtijaj Tabarsi** 2:495.
3. **Kamal al-Din** p. 483; **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 176.

grace to the sick people of those who believe in you and grant them cure and good health, show your grace to the dead who were from those who believed in you by forgiving them and having mercy on them, show your mercy to the strangers who believed, by returning them to their fatherland with benefit and health, in the name of Muhammad and all of his family."[1]

A part of his prayer in the *qunut*:

"…I call you by your name by which you created your creations and gave them sustenance as you wanted and they wanted. O, He who the nights and days do not change. I call you by the prayer that Noah called you by, and You saved him and his companions and annihilated his tribe. And I call You by the prayer that Your prophet Abraham called You by that when he called You, then You made fire cool and safe for him. And I call You by the prayer that Your speaker called You, when he called You, You then split the sea for him and saved the Israelites, and I call You by the prayer that Your soul Jesus called You by when he called You, You took then him to Yourself and saved him from his enemies. I call You by the prayer that Your love and Your chosen one, Your prophet, Muhammad (s) called You by when he called You, his prayer was accepted, You saved him from the claws of the parties and give him victory over Your enemies. I call You by your name that, when You are called by that name, You reply; O, the one that the creation, order and command is in Your hands, O, the one who are aware of anything, O, the one that the number of everything is in your hand, O, the one that the rotation of night and day has made no change in Him and different voices don't lead Him in error, O, the one who no word and language is hidden of Him and the persistence of those who insist does not force Him to do any work.

I want You to send greetings to Muhammad and his family that are Your selected ones among the people, I want You to send greetings on all of Your prophets that communicated Your guidance and took the contract of obedience from people for You. I want from You to send greetings on all of Your pious servants. O, He who never breaks

1. Sayyid Ibn Tawus, **Muhj al-D'awat** p. 295; Fayd Kashani, **Sahifah Mahdiyah** p. 112.

His promise, make certain the promise that You made with me, accumulate my companions for me and strengthen the power of patience in them, help me against your enemies and the enemies of your prophet, do not disappoint me because I am Your slave, the son of Your slave and Your bondswoman and I am like a captive in front of You. My Lord! You are the one that showed Your grace to me and granted me such a position and gave me superiority over many of Your creatures by this position, I want from You to send greetings on Muhammad and his family and give certainty to what You have promised me, indeed You are the truthful one and never break Your promise, and You have ability over everything."[1]

A part of the greetings of that Imam on the Prophet (s):

"O, Allah! Send greetings on Muhammad who is the master of prophets, the end of the messengers and the reason of the Lord of the worlds; the one who was selected in the eternity and in the world of shadows and Jinns, and the one who is free of any fault and defect; the one whose help all people hope for, and hope for his intercession and the religion of Allah has given to him."[2]

9. Samples of Ziarats of the Imam ('a)

1. Great is Allah, Great is Allah, there is no Lord but Allah, and Allah is Great, and praise belongs to Allah, praise to Allah who guided us and showed us his enemies and his friends, the one who granted us the grace of visiting our leaders, the one who did not put us among the obstinate ones and the malevolent enemies, the one who did not put us among those who were intemperate about them and entrusted the control of the world of existence to them, the one who did not put us among those who were in doubt about their Imamate and were neglectful in paying their right, greetings to the guardian of Allah and the son of the guardians of Allah, greetings to the one that Allah has reserved for the honour of his friends and abjectness of his enemies, greetings to the light that the pagans wanted to extinguish but Allah would not allow, he completed his light in spite of their will and

1. **Muhj al-D'awat** p. 68.
2. **Ghaibat Tusi** p. 165; meantime a long greeting on the prophets and the representatives of the imam ('a), **Sahifah Mahdiyah** p. 53.

confirmed it by giving him longevity until the day that he reveals the truth in spite of the will of the enemies. I bear witness that Allah selected you since your childhood and he perfected his sciences in you when you reached maturity, and you will be Alive till you annihilate the idols and the refractory persons, and you won't die till that time."

2. "O Allah! Send Your greetings to him and his companions and his servants in the time of his absence and his separation, and hide him behind a curtain that is impossible to reach and destroy, and protect him. O, Allah! Annihilate severely his revengeful enemies and protect his friends and his visitors. O Allah! Draw my sword from the sheath in the way of helping him as you cultivated my heart with his memory, and if You made a separation between me and visiting him by death, that You have made certain on your servants, rouse me in the time of his appearance while my shroud is wrapped on my waist in order so I make Jihad in his treadle in a line of men that you have praised in your book and said in praise of them: (They are like a building that is made of lead)."

3. "O Allah! Waiting became lengthy, the lewd people and debauchees blamed us and helping became difficult for us. O Allah! Show us the blessed face of Your guardian while we are alive and after our death. O Allah! I acknowledge in the presence of the owner of this blessed tomb that I believe in Returning. O Saheb al-Zaman, come to rescue me, come to rescue me, come to rescue me, I cut off my friends to unite with you, and I cut myself off from my city and my land for the great desire that I had for visiting you. I hid my affair from the inhabitants of my city and my land in order that you mediate for me before your Lord, my Lord and your fathers who are my masters till they grant me a good grace, and cause abundant riches and beneficence to flow to me."

4. "O Allah! Send your greeting to Muhammad and his family; they are from Allah and they are the leaders of people; accept my prayers and grant me whatever is in the interest of this and that world, which I have not mentioned in my prayer, on account of you being very praiseworthy and Great. And the greetings of Allah on Muhammad and his family."

5. After that, enter the platform (Saffah) and say two Rak'ats of prayer and say: "O Lord! Your servant has stood to say the Ziyarah before your guardian; the one who you have made obedience to him necessary for all slaves and free men of the world, and, on account of him, released your friends from the torture of fire. O Allah! Make my Ziyarah an accepted Ziyarah with an accepted prayer; the Ziyarah of the one that has verified Your guardian and there is no doubt in him. O Allah! Do not put this Ziyarah for me as my last Ziyarah and never cut off my feet from going to visit his father and grandfather. O Allah! Grant me replacement of the expense that I suffered for his Ziyarah, and give me, my brothers, my fathers and all of my family the benefit of whatever you put for me as my sustenance. O Imam, your existence of whom, believers will be saved, and by whom the pagans and deniers will be annihilated, I bid you farewell…"[1]

1. Sayyid Ibn Tawus, **Mesbah Al-Zayer** p. 327; **Sahifah Mahdiah** p. 173; **Mu'ajam Ahadith al-Imam Al-Mahdi** 4:491.

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18. Al-Mahdi al-Muntadher bain al-Tasawor wal-Tasdiq, Muhammad Tai, Bierut 1st edition 91420h.).

19. Majm'a al-Zawaid wa Manb'a al-Fawaid, Noor al-Din 'Ali Abu Bakir al-Haithami, died (807h.), Dar al-Fiker Publications, Beirut (1412h.).

20. Muroj al-Thahab, Abu al-Hasan 'Ali bin al-Hussain bin al-Masudi, died (346h.).

21. Musnad abu Dawud al-Taialisi, Sulaiman bin Dawud abu Dawud al- Taialisi, died (204h.), Dar al-M'arif, Beirut.

22. Musnad Ahmed bin Hanbal, Ahmed bin Hanbal Abu Abdullah al-Shibani, died (241h.), Muasast Qurtubah, Cairo.

23. Musnad al-Shihab, al-Qadi Abi abdullah Muhammad bin Salamah al-Qada'ai, died (454h.).

24. Misbah al-Tahajud, sheikh al-Tusi, died (460h.), 1st edition (1411h.), Muasasat Fikh al-Shi'ah, Beirut.

25. Matalib al-Suol fi Manaqib Al al-Rasoul, Kamal al-Din Muhammad bin Talha al-Shafi'ai, died (652h.).

26. Ma'adin al-Hikmah, Muhammad bin Muhsin Faid al-kashani.

Ma'ani al-Akhbar, Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin al-Hussain bin 'Ali Saduq, died (381h.).

27. Mu'ajam Ahadith imam Mahdi (‘a), sheikh 'Ali Kurani al-'Amili. 1st edition, (1411h.)Muasasat al-Ma'arif al Islamiah, Qum.

28. Mikial al-Makarim, Muhammad Taqi Asfahani, died 91348h.), By 'Ali 'Ashor, 1st edition, (1421h.), Muasast al-'Alami, Beirut.

29. Mafatih al-Usul, Sayyid Muhammad bin 'Ali Tabatabi, died 91242h.)

30. Miftah Bab al-Abwab, Muhammad Mahdi bin Muhammad Taqi Khan, (1333h.).

31. Manaqib Al-Abi Talib, Ibn Shahir Ashoub, died (558h.), Najaf, (1376h.), Muntakhab Athar fi al-Imam al-thani 'Ashar, Lutf-Allh al-Safi, sayda m'asuma publication, Qum, Iran, 1st edition, (1419h.).

32. Man'a Tadwain al-hadith, Sayyid 'Ali al-Shahristani.

N

1. Al-Najim al-Thaqib fi Ahwal al-Hujah al-Ghaib, Hussain al-Tabrasi al-Nouri, died (1320h.), By Sayyid Yasin al-Mousawi, Anwar al-Huda Publications, 1st edition (1415h.), Qum.

2. Nudhum al-Mutanathir mi al-Hadith.

3. Al-Mutawater, Muhammad bin Faiad al-katani al-Magribi al-Idrisi, died (1927h.), Dar al-Kutob al-'Alimiah, Beirut, 2nd edition (1407h.).

4. Al-Nahdah wal-thawrah al-Mahdiah, al-Sheikh Murtada Mutahari, died (1399h.).

Q

1. Al-Qwal al-Mukhtasar fi 'Alamat al-Mahdi al-Muntadher, Abu al-'Abas Ahmed bin Muhammed bin Hajer al-Maki al-Haithami, died (974h.), by Mustafa 'Ashour, Maktabah al-Qur'an, Cairo.

2. Qurb al-Isnad, by Abu al 'Abbas Abdullah bin Ja'afar al-Himiari (a third century scientist).died (300h.), Muasasat Ahl al-Bayt (‘a).

R

1. Rijal al-Kashi (*ikhtiar ma'rifat al-rijal),* by Abu Ja'far Muhammad al-Hasan al- Tusi, who died (460 AH).

2. Rijal Ibn Dawud al-Hasan bin 'Ali al-Hilli, died (647h.).

3. Rasail al-Ghibah, Sheikh al-Mufid, died (413h.) Alaa Al-Ja'far, Dar al-Mufid, Beirut, 2nd edition (1414h.).

4. Risalat al-Thaqalayn, Dar al-Taqrib, Egypt.

5. Rashfat al-Sadi min bahir Fadil al-Nabi al-Hadi, Abu Bakir Abdull-Rahman bin Muhammad Shahab al-Din al-'Alawi al-Hadrami, died (1341h.), by 'Ali 'Ashour, Muhammad 'Ali Baidon Publications, Dar al-Kutob al-'Almiah, Beirut, 1st edition, (1418h.).

6. Ri'aiat al-Imam al-Mahdi llil Maraj'a wal-'Ulama al-'Alam, Sheikh Karim al-Jhrami, Dar Yasain al-Bierutiah Publication.

7. Rawdhat al-W'adhian, al-Fatal al-Nisabouri, died (508h.), By Muhammad Mahdi al-Kharsan, Al-Sharif al-Radi, Qum.

S

1. Al-Siadah al-'Arabiah wa-Shi'ah wa 'Israilaiat fi 'Ahad bani 'Umaiah, Fan Foultn, Translation from French, Dr. Hasan Ibrahim and Muhammad Zaki, 2nd edition, Maktabah al-Nahdah al-'Arabiah.

2. Sifer al-Rouiah.

3. Sunan al-Nisai, Ahmed bin Shou'aib bin 'Alibin bahir al-Nisai, died (303h.).

4. Sunan Ibn Majah, by Muhammad bin Yazid bin Majah, who died (275 AH), Dar Alfikr.

5. Sunan Abi Dawud, by Sulaiman bin al-Ash'ath al-Sajistani, who died (275 AH), by Sa'id Muhammad al-Laham, Dar al-Fiker, 1st edition.

6. Sirat A'alam al-Nubala, by Abi Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Thahabi, who died (748 AH), 9th edition (1413 AH), Mo'asasat al-Risalah.

7. Shawahid al-Tanzil, al-Hakim al-Hasakani, died (5th century h.), by Muhammad Baqir al-Mahmoudi, Majma'a Ihia al-Thaqafah al-Islamiah, 1st edition (1411h.)

8. Sharih Usoul al- Kafi, Sar al-Din Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-Shirazi, known as (Sadir al-Mutalihain). Died (1050h.)

9. al-Sahifah al-Hadiah wa Tuhafa al-Mahdiah, Ibrahim bin Muhsain al-Kashani, died (1345h.), Madrasat al-Imam al-Mahdi (‘a), Qum

10. Sahifa al-'Ahid, Lebanon.

11. Sahifa al-Nour, Imam Roh Allah al-Mousawi Khomini (ra), died (1997), by Abdulla-Rahman al-Turki and Kamil al-kharat.

12. Sahih ibn Haban bi Tartib ibn al-Balban, Muhammad bin Haban abu Hatim al-Tamimi al-Basti, died (354h.), Muasasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 2nd edition (14141h.), by Shou'ab al-Arnaut.

13. Al-Sawa'aq al-Muhriqah, ibn Abi Hajar al-Hithami al-Maki, who died (974h.), Maktabat al-Qahira.

14. Sahih Muslim, Abu al-Hussain Muslim bin al-Hajaj al-Qashiri al-Nisabouri, died (261h.), Dar Ihia al-Turath al-'Arabi, Beirut, by Fuad Abdull-Baqi.

T

1. Al-Thari'ah ila Tasanif al-Shi'ah, Sheikh Muhsin bin 'Alial-Darbandi, known as (Agha Buzorg al-Tehrani), died (1389h.).

2. Taj al-Mawalid Abu al-Fadil bin al-Hasan Tabrasi, died (548h.), Maktabah Ayatullah ma'ashi Najafi, Qum.

3. Tarikh al-Khulafa', by Jalal al-Din Abdul-Rahman al-Suyuti, Died (911 AH).

4. Tarikh al-Ghibah al-Sugra, Shahid Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, (1422h.), Dar al-T'aruf, second edition, (1400h.).

5. Tarikh al-Ghibah al-Kubra, Shahid Muhammad Sadiq al Sadr, (1422h.), Maktabah Imam Amir al-Mu'aminin, Isfahan.

6. Tarikh Qum, Hasan bin Muhammad bin al Hasan Qumi, died (378h.).

7. Tarikh Bukhari, Muhammad Ismail bin Ibrahim bin al-Maghirah al Ju'afi, died(256h.).

8. Tarikh Baghdad, Ahmad bin 'Alial-Khatib al-Baghdadi, by Mustafa abdul-Qadir 'Ata, Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon, First edition.

9. Tuhaf al-‘Uqul, by Abi Muhammad al-Hasan bin 'Ali bin al-Hussan bin Shu'abah al-Harani, Mo'asasat al-Nashir, second edition (1404 AH).

10. Tabsirat al Wali, Hussain bin 'Ali Babawaih Qumi, died (329h.).

11. Tafsir al-Mizan, Sayyid Muhammad Hussain Tabatbai, died (1402h.) Qum.

12. Tafsir Majma'a al-Bayan, Sheikh Tabrasi, died (548h.) Muasasat A'alami, Beirut (1415h.).

13. Al-Tasrih bi Madmon al-Tawdih, Sheikh Khalid Abdullah al-jarjawi al-Azhari shafi'ai, died (905h.).

14. Tafsir Tha'alabi, Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-tha'alabi, died (427h.).

15. Tafsir 'Aiashi, abu al-Nadhar Muhammad bin Mas'ud bin 'Aiash al-Salami al-Samarqandi ('Aiashi) died (320h.).

16. Tafsir Qutubi (Jam'a li Ahkam al-Qur'an), Muhammad bin Ahmed Ansari Qutubi, died (671h.).

17. Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Adhim, Abu al-Fida, Ismail bin Kathir al-Qurashi al-Dimashqi, died (774h.).

18. Tafsir al-Kabir, Fakhir al-Razi Muhammad bin Umar died (606h.)

19. Taqrib al-Ma'arif, Abi al-Salah al-Halabi, died (447h.), Faris Hason (1417h.).

20. Tahthib al- Ahkam, by Abi Ja'afar Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Tusi, who died (460 AH), Dar al-Kitab al-Islamiah -Tehran, third edition (1364 AH).

21. Tawdih fi tawatur ma Jaa fi al-Muntadhar wa dajal al-Masih, Muhammad bin 'Alial-Shawkani, (died 1250h.).

22. Thawaba al-'amal, sheikh al-Saduq, died (381h.) second edition, Sharif al-Radi Publications, Qum.

U

Usol al-Dain, Muhammad Hasan Al-Yasain, Published by Muasasat Qaaim Al-Muhammad, Qum first edition (1413h.).

Y

Yanabi'a al-Mawadah, by Sulaiman bin Ibrahim al-Qunduzi, who died (1294 AH), Dar al-‘Uswah, 1st edition.